DAVID LEAF

THE Beach Boys

AND THE CALIFORNIA MYTH

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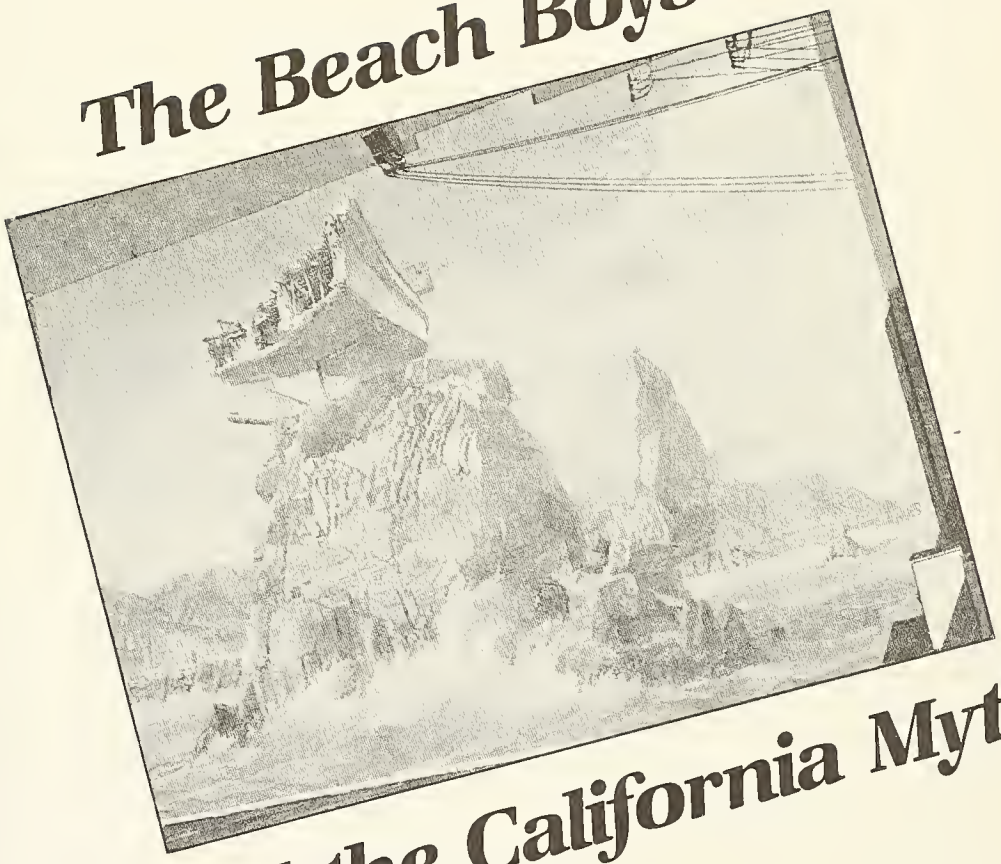
The Beach Boys



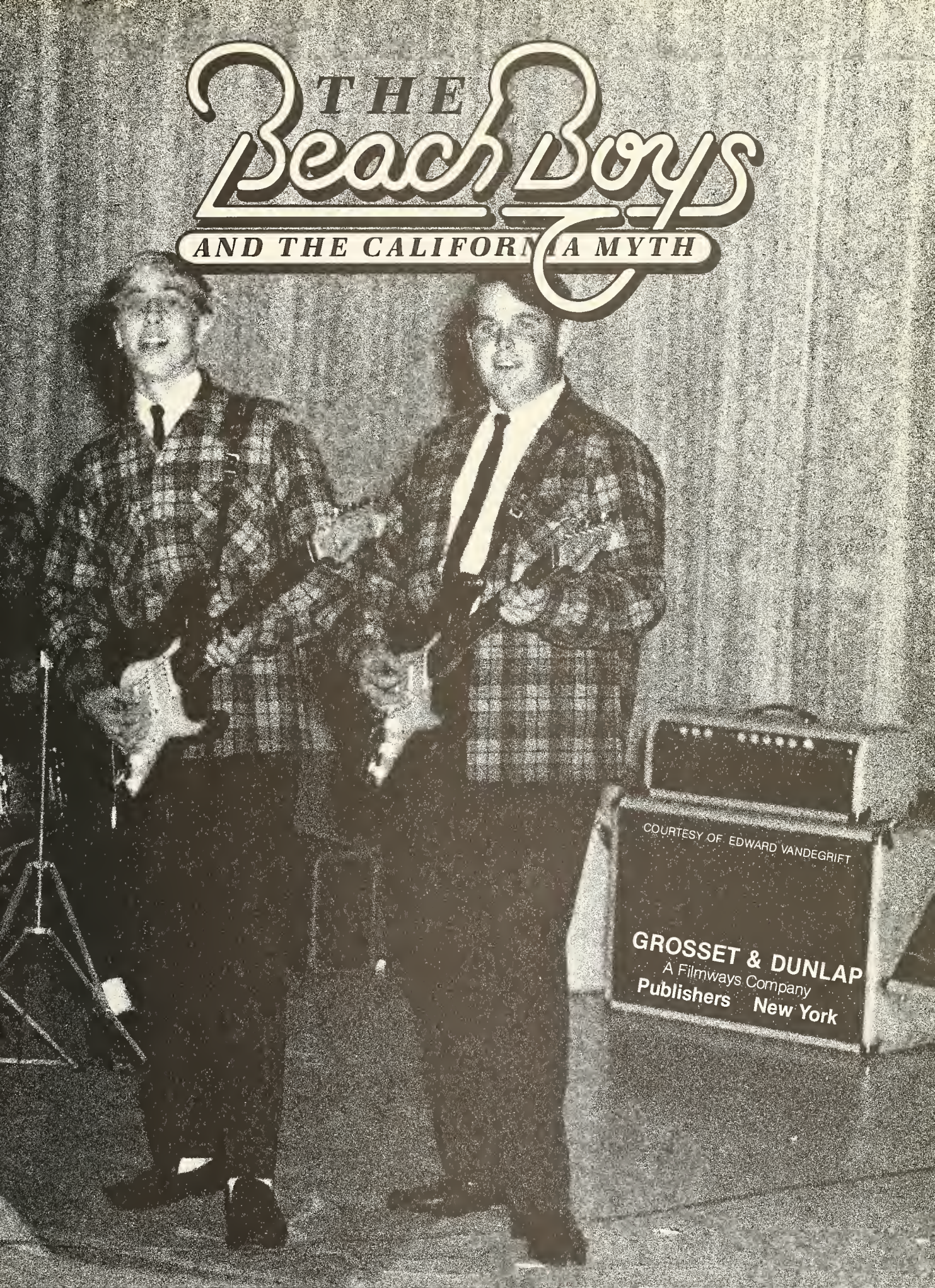
and the California Myth

D A V I D L E A F

MICHAEL ZAGARIS

THE Beach Boys

AND THE CALIFORNIA MYTH



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Published simultaneously in Canada

Library of Congress catalog card number: 77-088432
First printing 1978
ISBN 0-448-14625-8 hardcover edition
ISBN 0-448-14626-6 paperback edition

Designed by Jon Goodchild
Photo Research: David Leaf
Front Cover: Guy Webster
Back Cover: Jim Marshall
Typeset by The Type Shop, California

Printed in the United States of America

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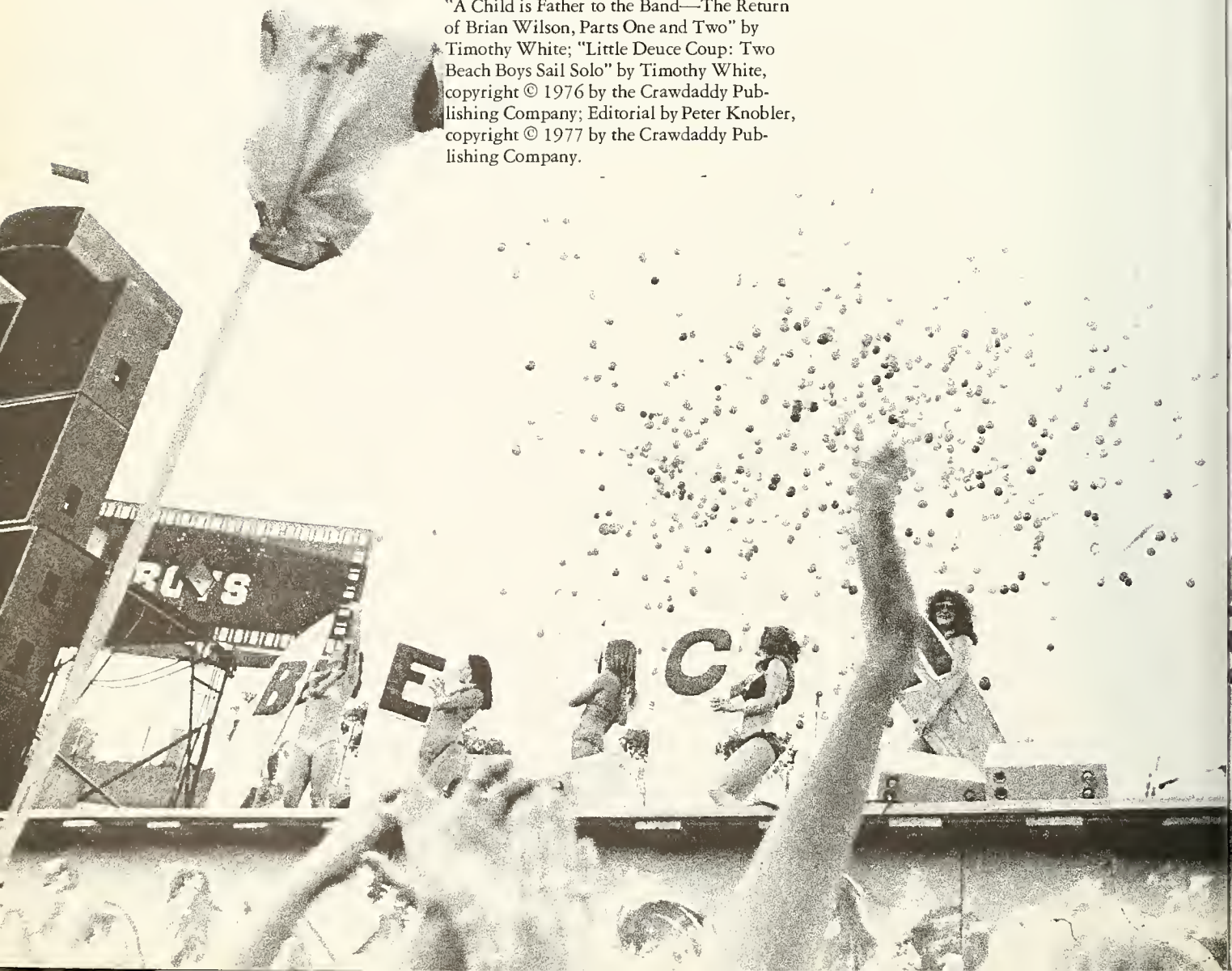
To Bob, with love and hope



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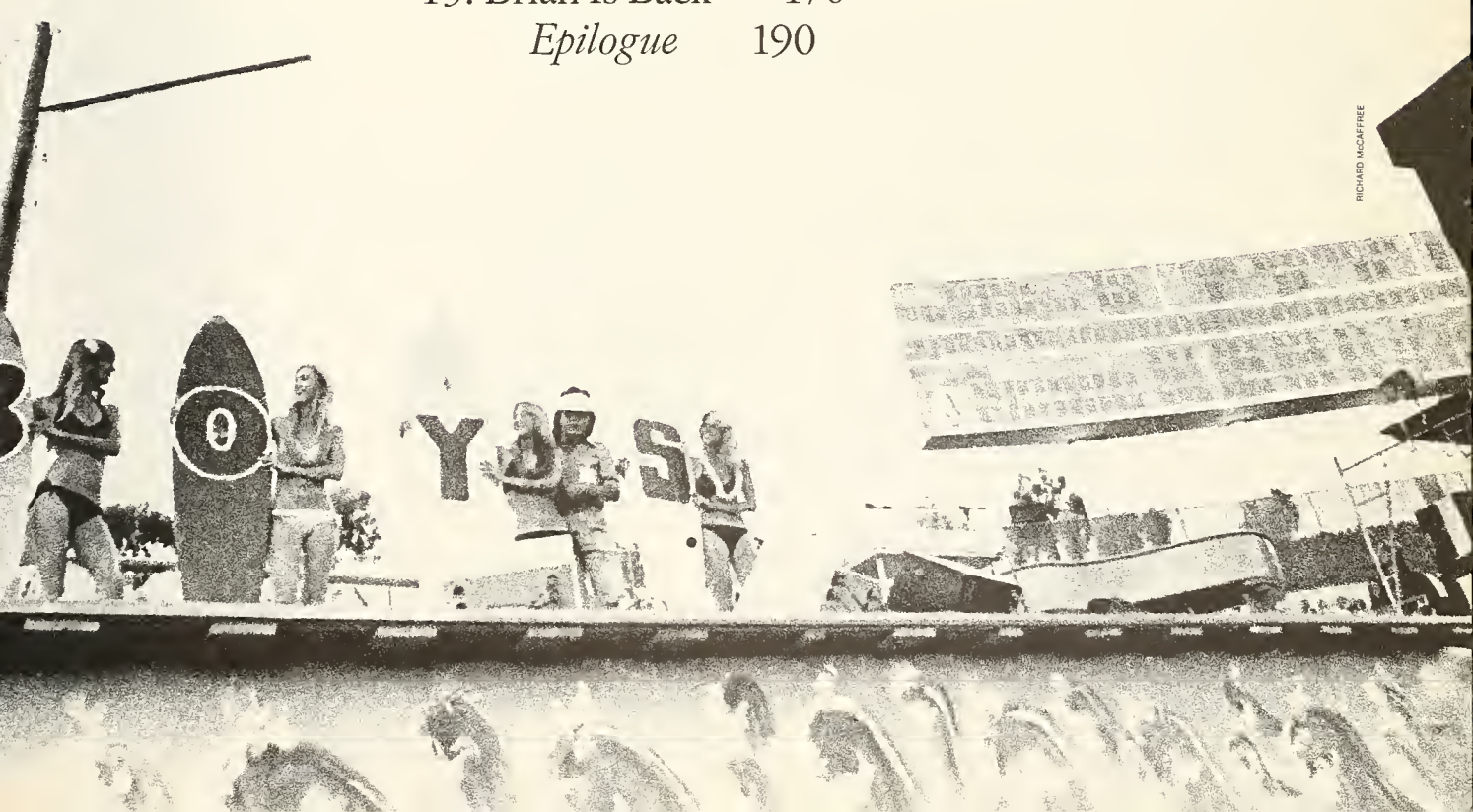


"I don't think that the California Myth, the dream that a few of us touched, would have happened without Brian, and I don't think Brian would have happened without the dream. They're inseparable."

—Jimmy Webb, noted composer of such pop classics as "Up, Up and Away," "MacArthur Park," and "Wichita Lineman."

LESTER COHEN

Brian Wilson, summer 1977.

This is the story of Brian Wilson, an unpretentious kid who fooled around at the piano, captured the teenage soul and became an artist. As a young man, Brian created a California Myth through his music. Ultimately, he became one of the myth's most tragic victims.

It wasn't Brian's main intention that the rest of the world would embrace his dream. Brian Wilson's California was his personal fantasy, a reflection off the back wall of his mind of what he wanted his homeland to be. This shy teenager never "hung-ten" on a surfboard, but despite his hangups about the ocean, he created a body of music that had everyone wishing they were surfin' and draggin' and having "Fun, Fun, Fun."

Unfortunately for Brian, the success and the pressure for more success was more than he could handle. It drove him to search for an "answer," and along the way, he tried all the occult parasciences as well as many of the chemical solutions. LSD provided Brian with one answer, but it produced too many new questions. Brian found his escape in drugs, but it was a peace with a false bottom. In his own words, drugs for Brian became "heaven and hell."

Brian's search wasn't unusual. Most artists and great thinkers are experimenters, people who consistently test the limits. Often, as in Brian's case, it's the result of a beautifully innocent, childlike curiosity that produces a fascination with all things new. For Brian, that meant new sounds, but his experimentation wasn't a simple or sole preoccupation. His record company and his family resented his progress, were afraid that he might move so far ahead that he would leave them behind. To the family, art took a back seat to paying the bills. So Brian Wilson retreated, a prisoner of his own talent, a man who was seemingly only wanted and needed by his family if he would again create his myth-music for them.

When Brian's music turned from the happy California sound to a more serious examination of his emotions, there was a rebellion within the group and resistance from the record company. Brian's defense was to retreat into an eccentric character called Brian Wilson. The Brian Wilson mystique was at the core of the Beach Boys' machine; unfortunately, the game consumed Brian. As 1978 begins, it appears that Brian has become bored with all the posing and playing and suffering and may be about to step out of the long shadow cast by his past triumphs.

There was a time when it was much simpler, much happier. Brian's personal life has always been difficult, but the music was once easy and perfect. Artistically, Brian Wilson was an instinctual genius. He took his feelings and put them on wax. The catharsis of his personal life, by a pleasant coincidence, happened to be perfect medicine for those schooltime and summertime blues. Kids in Kansas City and Toledo could hardly go surfing. Instead, they had the car radio and the Beach Boys telling them about this magical place where life revolved around the beach, and that short step from your woodie to the sand would attract amazonian blondes. Sexist? Yes. But eternally seductive.

Brian Wilson's special magic in the early and mid-1960s was that he was at one with his audience. There was no "writing down" to the listeners. Brian had a teenage heart, until it was broken. Before that happened, Brian used the Beach Boys music to "invent" California.

California has always occupied an exalted position in popular American culture, whether it was the Gold Rush days or the heyday of Hollywood. Brian Wilson's particular California Myth is a product of the 1960s, and it is important to remember that to teenagers in 1961, California was just a state, not yet a state of mind.

California in the late fifties and early sixties was a peaceful place, the repository of the middle-class American dream, but it was the dream of the adults. Their children hadn't taken over; that came later.

When the Beach Boys started out, surfing was just a sports fad with little chance of spreading to the rest of the country for the simple reason that much of America is landlocked. Because of their geographical predicament, America's children turned to the Beach Boys for their surfing. Surfing, in this musical idiom, stood for freedom, the ocean, the sun, and the cruising fun that the Beach Boys supposedly enjoyed "out there" in coastal California.

That teenage lifestyle was immensely appealing to the rest of the country and eventually to much of the world. Writer Nik Cohn described California as a teen heaven, "a hugely enlarged reality [that] verges on complete fantasy . . . it is the joob-joob land far beyond the sea where age is suspended at twenty-five, school is outlawed, Coke flows free from public fountains and the perfect cosmic wave unfurls endlessly at Malibu." For kids whose oceans and beaches were made by intersecting asphalt and fire hydrants, whose winters were filled with long, cold, snowy nights, California had to be the end of the rainbow.

As rock writer and native Californian Ken Barnes admitted, "If locals knew 'Surf City' was an idealized phantom on the order of the 'cities-paved-with-gold' hype which attracted the Spanish explorers to the state in the first place, they never let on to outsiders. Compared to anywhere else, the general in-state attitude held, California was close enough to paradise anyway."

This also meant that the Beach Boys' appeal was greatest in places where making waves in the bathtub was the closest anyone got to the surf. The Beach Boys' initial big successes were in California towns that were located inland. San Bernadino, one of the first hotbeds of Beach Boys fever, is over sixty miles from the ocean. It might as well have been a thousand, because San Bernadino's teenagers mostly just dreamed of the surfing life, a dream that was lived out through the Beach Boys. That vicarious lifestyle was particularly appropriate since Dennis Wilson was the only Beach Boy who was a surfer. In the vernacular of the time, the Beach Boys were "gremmies," that is, they did not surf. Many of the real surfers came to resent the

Beach Boys for the false image the group's name created. The natives didn't need Brian Wilson's fantasies; they were at the beach every day living them.

Singer/songwriter Jimmy Webb was living in Oklahoma in 1963 and recalls that "the first time I heard a surfing record, I was riding a tractor. I had my radio taped to the tractor, and I was driving out through the corn patch dragging a big plow and I had my shirt off. I heard this group singing about 'Surf City.' And I thought, 'What the hell is a surf city?' It meant nothing to me in Oklahoma; I'd never seen the damn ocean. But the sound was infectious . . . it was young, and it was obvious that they were talking about something that I would like to find out about."

A year later, Jimmy Webb was a teenager living in San Bernadino. He remembers his first California summer as "one of those endless summers with the orange blossoms, and you could smell the orange groves just hanging in the air, and it was kind of a magic time. We weren't completely up to our necks in the war; there weren't any economic crises threatening the country. For two or three years, those summers were very idyllic. There were no responsibilities. We were young; the girls really were, no matter how chauvinistic it may sound, soft and feminine and lived their own version of the myth."

To a newcomer visiting the West Coast, the California that existed in Brian Wilson's mind is infinitely more appealing than the reality of the place itself—because the California dream doesn't exist anymore. It couldn't exist. I've certainly looked for it.

My search began a few years ago on my first visit to Los Angeles. More accurately, it began when I first heard the music of the Beach Boys and Jan and Dean. What normal (or abnormal) drooling adolescent could resist the call to "Surf City" where it was "two girls for every boy." For me as a teenager living in New Rochelle, New York, the California fantasy has always been powerful, strong enough to lure me—and thousands like me—to California. Back in the sixties, though, California seemed distant and unreachable, and my personal California dream was relegated to the back burners of my mind. Still, its glow was always tantalizing.

As my idealism turned into protective cynicism, California represented a last outpost of innocence and optimism. Because I lived in the East, the Beach Boys' music became my refuge, my California. By the time I made my pilgrimage to California in 1974, almost everyone's American dream had been shattered. I knew deep down that there wasn't a "better way of life" but . . . it was still exciting to step into the Pacific Ocean for the first time. California has always held out the hand of romance. And while it sometimes appears to be an elaborate tease, California is an incredible and unique place.

My initial view of Los Angeles was from an American Airlines 747. As I stared past my reflection in the tiny double window, I was immediately struck by the suburban blandness. Could this be Chuck Berry's "Promised Land"? Hardly. Still, there is and always will be one key to Southern California's appeal—the omnipresent sun and the boundless ocean. After all, hadn't the Beach Boys promised that all my problems could be solved by "The Warmth of the Sun"?

My first visit to the West was more of a quick inspection than anything else. I do remember driving north on the Pacific Coast Highway listening to a song called "Beach Baby," and how that song was a perfect soundtrack for an outsider touring California—"Beach Baby, Beach Baby, give me your hand, from July to the end of September/Surfin' is fun, we'll be out in the sun every day."

When I moved to Los Angeles in 1975, I realized immediately that the standard clichés were mostly inoperative. California is basically a benign place, much like any other locale. By virtue of its vastness, Los Angeles does offer more opportunity than most parts of the country. The one drawback to its size is that it gobbles up people and lets them get lost in themselves. If you want to hide from the world, this is the perfect place. At the same time, Southern California is really just a gigantic small town trying to become a cosmopolitan city. One observer called it "Iowa by the Beach." The people are a curious blend of city sophisticate and country farmer, but in 1978 provincial mentality prevails. The weather is always a chief topic of discussion. As Jack Smith, chronicler of the *Big Orange* noted, "Our spirits rise with our reservoirs."

The California clichés really haven't been changed or challenged since Brian Wilson created them fifteen years ago. For teenagers, they remain incredibly powerful fantasies, so powerful that in 1978 they have become institutionalized clichés. The media men and women of Madison Avenue are partially at fault. They use California as a giant soundstage for their product pitches. Almost everyone, thanks to those millions of advertisements, aspires to the good life that supposedly exists for all in California. If Madison Avenue has helped create a culture that idolizes beautiful, unblemished, everlasting youth, then California is the home for the victims of that false god.

Skeptical? Turn on the tube, listen to the radio anytime. Those jingles are Beach Boys' melodies, the pictures are Beach Boys' fantasies. As Hal Blaine, a world-famous session drummer, notes, "The king of commercials in L.A. is the Beach Boys' sound." The advertising community shouldn't take all the blame. After all, they took their cue from one of the great salesmen of all time, Brian Wilson. If, in 1978, they sell shampoo with his music, remember that Brian first used those tunes in 1963 to sell California.

The myth was at its most potent in the early sixties before my generation came of age and decided that what Los Angeles had to offer wasn't worthwhile. When Southern California did epitomize the ideal youth, when the drive-in movie screens were showing films like "Girls on the Beach" or "Beach Blanket Bingo," the Beach Boys represented that way of life to the world. Behind that facade, the group always had internal and personal difficulties. Those problems made their image a false one, but that wasn't unusual for show business. The Beach Boys became a commodity, a very attractive one, and they became California's ambassadors to the world, selling good times that no longer existed.

The Beach Boys were so tied to Southern California that their decline in popularity can be directly traced to the emerging psychedelic era centered in San Francisco. As the media focus shifted briefly from Los Angeles to San Francisco, the Beach Boys became the "Bleach Boys" and "The California Hypes." By late 1967, Los Angeles had lost its position as the hippest town around.

Certainly, Southern California is a plastic place, but so is much of America. As a major media city, Los Angeles may have overcommercialized its product, but its contribution to youth culture shouldn't have been trivialized. The Sunset Strip riots were one of the first "calls to arms" for the sixties generation. Los Angeles gave birth to folk-rock (through the Byrds) and allowed an expression of outrage through protest music. It was slick—sure—but it was effective. But by 1967, there was no objectivity. Los Angeles was bankrupt and that was that.

The Beach Boys were simply lumped in with all the "hipper-than-thou" putdowns of Los Angeles. Few people were willing to admit that Brian Wilson was at the forefront of the musical revolution. Unfortunately for Brian and the Beach Boys, few were willing to look past the striped shirts and short hair. It was easier to condemn the Beach Boys for what they once were, than to try and understand what they were becoming. The Beach Boys' failure to play the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967 more than damaged their own career. It was a signal that Los Angeles was no longer at the center of the action. The media picked up on that and crowned San Francisco as the new home of hippiedom. By the time it was on the cover of *Life* magazine, the Summer of Love was almost over.

The latter half of the sixties was filled with youthful idealism tinged with the selfishness of middle-class white youth who didn't want to go into the armed forces. Vietnam was an immoral war, but few of us questioned the morality of student deferments. It was more convenient for us to fight our war in the streets of Berkeley, California, and Washington, D.C. If we suffered from the guilt of undeserved wealth, the least we could do was to demonstrate for peace and equality. "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh, NLF is gonna win." Indeed.

Through all of this, California was always in the vanguard, be it the Free Speech movement or the use of psychedelic drugs. Los Angeles's Sunset Strip and San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury influenced a generation of young people and brought about a westward migration. A hip teenager just had to be where "it was happening."

California was once looked on by America as its final frontier. Today, it's more like a last chance on its last legs. The Beach Boys are in a similar position, but nobody wants to accept that fact. Even though they are balding and paunchy, they are all we have left to remind us of our own golden summers. The Beach Boys, like Southern California, are a fading jewel.

The 1970s are one long, nostalgic look at a better time. That means movies like *American Graffiti,* TV programs like "Happy Days," and rock groups like the Beach Boys. While the first two are idealized and cleansed versions of what it was like in the late fifties and early sixties, the Beach Boys are still the original. They may be in their thirties, with divorce, drugs, and personal disaster behind them, but they are still the same guys churning out a music that struck a basic chord in white middle-class American society. The Beach Boys' music created a myth that didn't work, for them or anyone else, and when nothing else worked, a disillusioned America returned to that myth.

The music, however, has transcended their personalities and the ravages of time. Brian Wilson's music is for the ages, and the Beach Boys' concerts have become celebrations of a long-lost, imaginary past that '70s youth can only truly experience through the Beach Boys.

I came to California to test the myth, to meet the Beach Boys, looking for symbols. What I found was an incredibly complex human situation. I kept peeling away at the surface, and the more I dug, the harder it got. It wasn't long before my journey went too far. My journalistic investigations and excavations discovered more human suffering than I really wanted to know.

Art and suffering are always found together, but in this case, the hardship has overwhelmed the artistry. And this is the story of an artist—Brian Wilson—growing up, growing out, growing away from his family. It's the story of his creative development. It's also about the snuffing-out of his visionary spark just as he neared the peak.

Because Brian Wilson has a unique sense of humor, this book has funny moments. Because of what happened to Brian, this is ultimately a tragic story. It is never easy to examine one's heroes, but this is what I found when I came to California in search of the Beach Boys.

—David Leaf
Los Angeles, 1978

"Music is Brian Wilson's best friend, lover, everything. On a one-to-one basis, it's the only thing that has never wronged him. It's when people, and gossip, and record companies came into play that things went askew. The music never betrayed him. And given Brian's vulnerable, exclusive nature, it's only natural that it's the central fact and concern in his life. He may forget a name or a contract, but he never forgets the music. It's a consequence of devotional thinking, and geniuses are prone to it." *

—Van Dyke Parks, one of Brian Wilson's closest friends.

All around him, his music swirled—"California Girls," "I Get Around," "Surfin' U.S.A." Most everybody in the audience was getting off on those timeless songs, feeling fine as the harmonies washed over them. Everybody, that is, except Brian Wilson.

For Brian, the concert, any concert is an ordeal. This particular show was at the Los Angeles Forum on a rainy December evening in 1977, and while the "oldies" succeeded in getting the crowd on their feet, nobody in the audience could look at Brian Wilson and enjoy the music.

Stoically, he sat at his grand piano, sometimes playing, sometimes singing. Mostly, though, his face was a mask, and while his voice revealed no emotion, his onstage behavior was a spectacle of nervousness. Dennis Wilson, aware of his older brother's discomfort, went to Brian's side, hugged him, offered encouragement and attempted to get Brian to sing along . . . "Gotta keep those lovin' good vibrations a-happenin' with you." Brian opened his mouth once and nothing came out; another time and he emitted an atonal squeal. He turned to Dennis with a look that said, "I'm too scared."

It's a sad, strange and touching scene that has been played out in concert halls all over the United States for the past few years; a picture straight out of the sadist's textbook. Why is this troubled man part of a rock and roll show? Why is he being put on display?

Those questions have one very simple answer and dozens of more complex ones. At the heart of the situation, though, is the fact that Brian Wilson is the goose that laid the golden egg, and if it's been a while since he's turned out any fourteen-karat songs, at least he attracts a crowd. People are always interested in looking at someone who once did something important.

Brian Wilson is the man behind the Beach Boys, America's longest surviving rock band, and, by now, a legitimate institution. And, like the place they're from and have mythologized in their songs, the group has become a lie, a well-polished fun house mirror that serves as nostalgic entertainment for America's youth. As one associate of the group remarked of the Beach Boys' last five years, "The only place there was ever any harmony in the group was when they sang on stage." That has been true of most of their lives.

Regardless of that false image of harmony, I love the Beach Boys, or rather, I love the music that Brian Wilson created and transmitted to the world through the group. What I love and cherish about the Beach Boys is the feeling in their music. No matter what, that can never be taken away. The music is for all times.

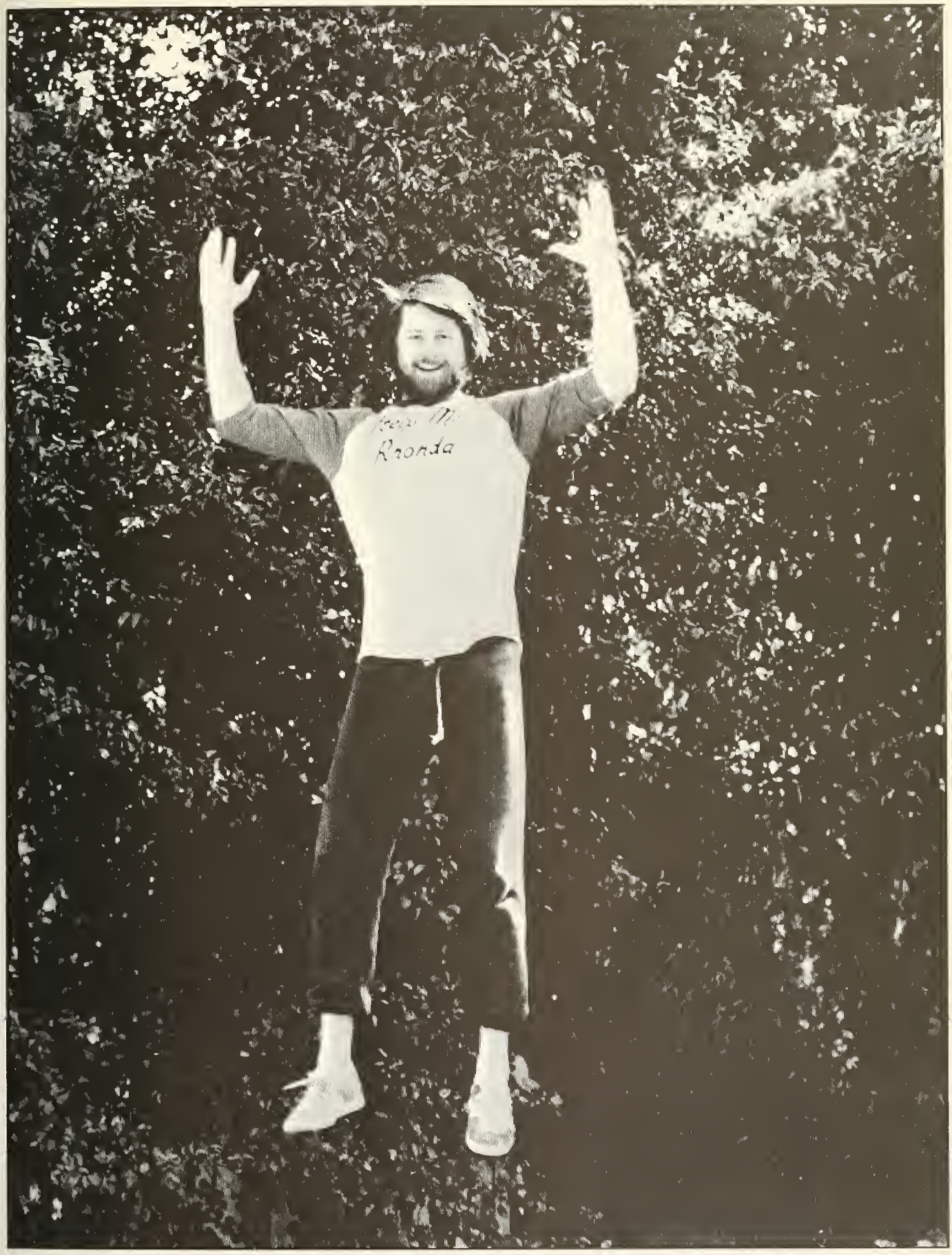
The people who are the Beach Boys have been the objects of love for many years. It is they who are the tangible link between ourselves and our youth. More than that, the Beach Boys are the messengers that Brian Wilson, once upon a time, sent out into the world to spread his gospel. Long ago, tired of rehashing the same thing night after night, Brian left the road to explore his creativity. Eventually, the Beach Boys became a traveling revival show living off of Brian Wilson's gift. Brian hasn't been part of the Beach Boys for a long time.

That's why it's so strange to see him on-stage again. Brian Wilson is a private person; he doesn't belong in a huge arena with over fifteen thousand pairs of eyes bearing down on him. He is a sensitive, shy, introverted man who often feels uneasy when there is one stranger in the room. Brian never could handle the gaze of the public eye; that was one of the key reasons for his retreat. Yet his family has put him into a situation where there are quite a few strangers. It gets complicated. There is the family's love of Brian, and then, there is the family's love of fame and fortune.

In 1966, Brian Wilson wanted the freedom to make the music that was in his head and didn't want to be restricted solely to the Beach Boys. The group and his family fought him over that desire, and he eventually withdrew from the Beach Boys. Brian Wilson wasn't a Beach Boy for many years, but his name has been used to keep the family business going. To this day, Brian isn't free to make music outside of the family situation.

This book is written for one man, Brian Wilson. It is written with the hope that he will one day soon be treated with all the care and respect due to each of us. As a man who has made millions happy, he has certainly more than earned it. Even though his musical development was arrested before he articulated his revolutionary concepts, what Brian has created has influenced every popular composer. All of our lives have been enriched by Brian Wilson's art.

* *Crawdaddy,* June 1976.



COURTESY OF THE BEACH BOYS

Music. Always, there was music in the Wilson home. From the very beginning, Brian, Dennis, and Carl Wilson enjoyed the sounds of their parents playing duets at the piano and organ. It was this early and constant exposure that created a love of and devotion to music that would dominate their adult lives.

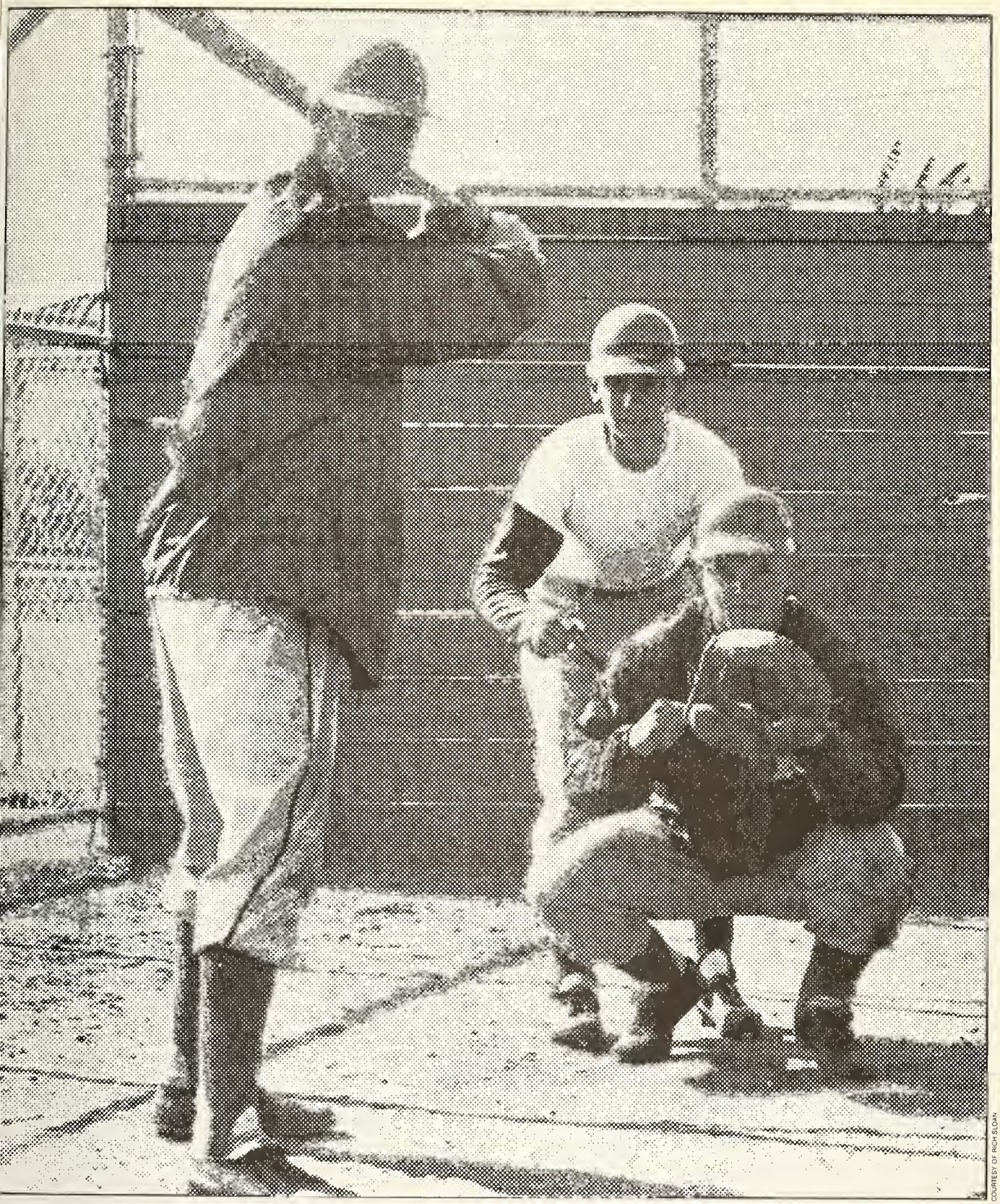
Lots of children are hit over the head with music lessons and never learn much more than "Chopsticks." What made the Wilson kids different is what they all refer to as "Brian's God-given talent." Wherever it came from, Brian Wilson was in the music and the music was in Brian very early on. Outside of the house, he was a fun-loving jock; inside, he was an avid musician.

As Father Murry Wilson once noted, "All they ever heard was music in their house. And, on occasion, family arguments."

Those "family arguments" were the other constant in the core of the Beach Boys, and the punishments meted out by Murry included severe physical beating as well as verbal degradation. Some people loved Murry, others insist he was a "sick man," but few will deny that he physically and verbally abused his children. There is no way to measure precisely the effect of such an upbringing, but it can be said safely that the troubled adulthood of the Wilson brothers can be attributed partially to their difficult childhood.

The love/hate relationship that Brian and his brothers had with their father cannot be ignored. It has had a great effect throughout their careers and in their personal lives.

COURTESY OF THE BEACH BOYS



Above, Brian batting, spring 1959. Opposite above, Murry Wilson. Opposite below, Hawthorne, 1950—Brian, Carl, an unnamed friend, and Dennis.

1.
RHAPSODY IN BLUE

As Holden Caulfield once said, "If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born and what my lousy childhood was like."

As Dennis Wilson often admits, "Our father beat the shit out of us. His punishments were outrageous."

Brother Brian Wilson puts it more diplomatically: "I don't have really great memories as far as [being] a family member. It wasn't all that super; we had a tough enough time of it . . . it was sort of a lower-middle-class family for a while. We struggled."

Brian wasn't just talking about a financial struggle; he was also referring to the emotional struggle of growing up in a home dominated by Murry Wilson.

COURTESY OF HIGH SLOAN

Father Murry was a self-made businessman who mortgaged his modest home to start his own heavy machinery business. A man driven to succeed, he was a failed and frustrated songwriter, and he was always trying to get his tunes recorded. Once Lawrence Welk played a song of Murry's called "Two-Step, Side-Step." There was even a little dance to go with it, but it hardly replaced the Lindy or the cha-cha. Despite his lack of substantial musical success, Murry made his presence known to a few people in the industry, and these contacts would pave the way for the Beach Boys' easy, early rise. That, however, is getting way ahead of the story.

It began in the Midwest, as do so many California stories. Murry Gage Wilson was born in Hutchinson, Kansas, and his family moved to California when he was nine years old. Audree Neve Korthof's family was from Minneapolis, Minnesota, and they traveled westward when Audree was ten. Murry and Audree met at Washington High School in Los Angeles and were married in 1938 when they were both twenty. Their first home was a small rented house at 8012 South Harvard Boulevard in the South Bay section of Los Angeles. Brian Douglas (born June 20, 1942) and Dennis Carl (born December 4, 1944) both came along before the Wilsons moved to Hawthorne, California, in early 1945. Hawthorne at that time was a mostly white, lower middle-class town. It is located only five miles inland from the Pacific Ocean. Carl Dean (born December 21, 1946) completed the family that would fill the small five-room house at 3701 West 119th Street. For years, the three Wilson brothers shared a bedroom, until the garage was remodeled into a music room that saw double duty as Brian's bedroom.

Murry Wilson was an ambitious and generous man who wanted to provide his family with the best things in life. After a number of years at the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company (where he lost an eye in an industrial accident), Murry started his own modest company. ABLE (*A*lways *B*etter *L*asting *E*quipment) Machinery's chief source of income was renting out building equipment such as cranes. Murry operated ABLE through the early '60s until his work with the Beach Boys demanded his full-time attention. Ultimately, he made a fortune as the group's publisher.

When Murry Wilson died on June 4, 1973, a Warner Brothers Records obituary read, in part: "Murry Wilson was a hard, oyster shell of a man, aggressively masking a pushover softness which revealed itself at the sound of a beautiful chord. . . ." The music moved Murry. Unfortunately, it appears that little else the Wilson brothers did satisfied their "old man." In 1976, Dennis recalled, "We had a shitty childhood . . . my dad was a tyrant. He used to whale on us, physically beat the crap out of us. I don't know kids who got it like we did. His big number was, 'Don't ever lie, I'll beat the shit out of you!' . . . I thought it was insane." In another interview Dennis further explained that despite the risk, "I used to lie to him when I was very young. I learned at an early age to be very protective of myself; I played a great mind game."

Brian didn't play mind games. He was

always trying to please his father. "Sometimes," Brian remembered, "I would almost *have* to do something, to do what he'd like . . . I found myself getting As and Bs in school and saying, 'Hey look, Dad,' and him saying, 'Very good, son.'" Brian said he was always "wanting to accomplish something for him." In his youth, Brian was a fine athlete, a varsity performer in a number of sports. Still, Murry found fault in his performance on the field. Brian recalled, "I had him come to my football games and I'd say, 'What did you think of me?' and he'd say, 'You sloughed off, you're

lazy.'" It wasn't an occasional occurrence. Remembers Brian, "I used to catch it from him all the time over that stuff. It bothered me because it made me feel like I was goofing up, that I was inferior, it made me feel worthless and a number of emotions like that."

Apparently nothing, not even worldwide fame and the sale of millions of records, could please Murry. As children, they found it almost impossible to do the "right thing." Because of that, they often came in for a lot of punishment. Besides the frequent private beatings, Dennis remembered that Murry "burned my hands for playing with matches, and beat me up in front of my friends." A 1977 *New West* magazine article claimed that Murry Wilson "took out his rage on his three sons. Audree sobbed quietly and helplessly in the background, she says, while Murry unleashed an arsenal of sadistic punishments on the boys." These punishments, according to that article, included "forcing a pre-teen Brian to defecate on a newspaper to humiliate him," and another of Murry's favorite forms of retribution, making the boys "stare in the empty socket of his missing eye." In private, many people confirm that the Wilson brothers had it very hard.

Opposite, Brian at a high school prom. Above left, Murry holds two-week old Brian. Above center, Santa, Carl, Dennis, and Brian. Above right, Brian at four.

Yet they were still boys and despite the abuse, they had a lot of spunk, particularly Dennis. According to one tale, Murry had two glass eyes, one for everyday use and a special bloodshot model for hangovers. One night, Murry drank quite a bit and Dennis stole the bloodshot model and took it to school. Dennis was punished for this trespass.

One of the more amazing aspects of Brian Wilson's success as a composer and record producer is that he is almost entirely deaf in his right ear. Audree Wilson explains that Brian suffers from "nerve deafness. They [the doctors] say it might be congenital or it may have been caused by an injury." In preparing his epic 1971 *Rolling Stone* article, writer Tom Nolan confronted Murry with the rumor that Brian's deafness had been caused by a childhood blow on the ear from his father. That article (which used additional material by David Felton) also first presented the story that as a childhood (revenge?) prank, Brian had defecated on a plate and set it in front of Murry at the dinner table. Murry, of course, vehemently denied both stories. Feeling that Brian was probably the source of the "rumors," Murry telephoned Brian and angrily demanded that he retract the stories. Brian reportedly laughingly told his dad, "I'll tell you what. Let's tell them that I shit in your ear, and you hit me in the head with a plate." Still, there is no firm evidence as to what caused Brian's deafness. It could have been from a birth defect or an infection, or the consequence of a fight with a neighbor. It could have been the result of Murry's

Above (from left to right), Brian, age 7; Dennis, age 10; Carl, age 8. Below Dennis in ninth grade, spring 1960.

hitting Brian in the head. Regardless of the origin of the deafness, treatment and an operation in the sixties never restored Brian's hearing, and to this day, he's never heard stereo. As Brian told Mike Douglas in 1976, "It was sort of like being robbed of something, some pleasure of life. Stereo, when it came in in the fifties, everyone was so flipped, and here I was, Brian Wilson didn't hear stereo." For the man who created some of the greatest sound experiences of the sixties, it is a cruel irony that he could never fully comprehend sound. Possibly Brian's hearing problem contributed to his record-making skills. Because he could only hear mono sound, he may have been more attuned to what made a record sound good on the radio. "I still miss it," Brian remarked. "I think it's a little like being born blind. . . . I'm not complaining, but it's a little bit of a setback not to hear stereo."

Murry Wilson was a harsh parent, but there was no overt malice involved in his actions. Murry was bringing his boys up to make them men the best way he knew how. If this included physical violence and tongue-lashings, Murry still had his boys' interests in mind. That makes his actions more understandable but no more excusable. Audree Wilson, who was a very devoted and loving wife, was also at times a victim of Murry's abuse.

One person who knows the Wilson brothers as adults and who observed Murry Wilson's interactions with them feels that, in many ways, the brothers are all part of Murry, the result of Murry's images of what his children should be. Dennis, for instance, has Murry's incredible physical energy. He is very much a loner, driven by this incredible power that gives everything he does, including his music, an emotional intensity that is not often present in contemporary popular music. Generous to a fault, Dennis's emotions are always exposed, like a raw nerve that is constantly being jolted. As a child, Dennis was also a fighter, the only one of the three Wilson brothers to reflect their father's penchant for fighting. That may be because, as Audree Wilson remembers, "Dennis had it the hardest; he got some very hard spankings. [Murry] was tough; I used to think he was too tough." Audree also feels that Dennis is the most like Murry, "the temper, sort of bombastic at times. It's just like Murry revisited. They were certainly the most alike."

Carl, who has always been the silent buddha of the Beach Boys, didn't get beaten nearly as much as Dennis. As Audree recalls, "Carl had very little of it. He was always sitting, watching the parade go by, very calm." In that respect, Carl didn't change very much except that he asserted his leadership onstage, and when Brian retreated from his musical responsibilities, Carl picked up the reins and formed new music in his older brother's style. Carl, underneath the beard, also seems to resemble Murry the most physically, and the equanimity of his personality (helped along by TM and est) became crucial in keeping the Beach Boys together as a functioning band.

The brothers are all quite dissimilar,

and Audree feels that Brian isn't really like Murry, "but there are times when he just reminds me of him. I can't put my finger on what characteristic . . . Brian's really a gentle soul." Brian, more than his two brothers, reflects Murry's eccentric behavior, which may be, in part, a reaction to the pressure to excel that an oldest son feels. Like Murry, Brian's energies were directed toward achievement. Brian claims that "the Beach Boys' success hinges on the fact that Murry Wilson was like a sparkplug personality behind the group." It was Murry's drive, transferred to Brian, that would help create the Beach Boys.

All of that was far away. Before there could be Beach Boys, there had to be music. Audree Wilson remembers Brian's first musical moments. "When Brian was two he was singing nursery rhymes. . . . When Brian was seven, he had a beautiful voice, and would often sing with the church choir. He was a soloist. He was asked to sing at school functions, and he was already playing the piano. . . . By the time he was eight years old, he had a truly beautiful boy soprano voice, and he wasn't bashful about it. One time, a lady heard him sing and asked if he could sing with the choir at her church for Christmas . . . he was just a little guy, and it was really a thrill to see Brian with this chorus behind him. They did 'We Three Kings of Orient Are,' and he did a solo . . . an incredibly talented young guy."

In 1977, Brian recalled his first musical memory: "The very first song I was exposed to was 'Rhapsody in Blue'. . . . There's no better way to come into this world . . . than to hear a song like that being played. . . . I'm certain every time I hear it that I'm going back to age two. Actually, when I was two weeks old, they used to play 'Rhapsody in Blue' at my grandmother's house, where my mother used to go visit a lot." Brian said that the song "has become one of the songs of my life. It sort of became a general life theme." One friend of Brian's notes that the first song Brian ever sang in front of his family was "When You Wish Upon A Star."

Murry loved music, and Brian remembered that "he would sing to me. My mother would play the organ, and my dad would sing. They'd do duets, organ and piano. So as far back as I can remember, there's been music in my life." According to Brian, "The three brothers used to harmonize in bed. We'd all sleep in the same room. We used to sing this song, 'Come Down, Come Down from the Ivory Tower'; that was our special one we'd sing. We developed a little blend which aided us when we started to get into the Beach Boys stuff."

Even then, the music could cause Brian pain. Dennis recalls that "in the sixth grade, he used to sing so beautiful . . . Brian sang in school, and he sang very high, and all his buddies that he'd hang out with laughed at him. And he ran home from school, and I chased after him, and it broke my heart to see him emotionally involved in the music at such an early age and have his friends laugh at him, call him a girl or something. But every time that he's ever stuck it [his music] out, put it out for people to see, to share it with people, a lot of times he's been hurt."

Besides the Wilson brothers' developing musical blend, there was more than a little comedy. Brian's outrageous sense of humor has become part of the Beach Boys' legend, and their early singing nights provided Brian the opportunity to create hysteria. Audree recalls that they "were all in the same room, they would just howl. They would make up crazy stories. [Brian] was really just so full of fun," making funny faces or telling funny stories. Carl remembered that "after we went to bed, Brian would sit there trying to make us laugh. So we'd be trying not to laugh, covering our mouths, hiding under the sheets and Brian would keep cracking us up." These typical childhood nighttime frivolities did not go unnoticed or unpunished. Again, Carl: "First, my mother would come in and warn us. If our father came in, then it was curtains."

Despite his often overbearing, strict nature, Murry was also a generous man. He filled the Wilson home with as much music as their limited budget could afford. When Brian was very young, he took lessons on a toy accordion for six weeks. Audree recalls that "the object of that game was after six weeks, you buy the big accordion." Brian "just excelled, he flew through the lessons; but we couldn't afford to buy the accordion."

Otherwise, Brian might have become the first rock and roll accordionist. Brian did spend many hours at the family's piano and organ, basically teaching himself how to play. As Carl Wilson once noted, "There were many years of [Brian's] life where he did nothing but play the piano. Months at a time. Days on end. Four Freshmen records. Just all music."

Carl's first musical interest was in stringed instruments. Audree fondly recalls that when Carl was three, he used to watch a children's show that featured cowboy Spade Cooley playing the fiddle. "Carl would stand with his foot up on a stool, pretending he was playing the violin." Carl began to show more serious interest almost ten years later. "Carl was twelve, and he decided he wanted to play guitar. So we bought him an inexpensive one, and he took lessons from a neighbor. One day, he came home, and he was playing an old standard and one chord was way off. Brian said, 'How can you let him take lessons when he's learning the wrong chords?' That didn't last long, and Carl began playing on his own." Somewhere along the line, Carl also took lessons from John Maus, who later gained fame as one of the Walker Brothers.

"Dennis," Audree says, "was the last one to really participate. He started playing the piano when he was fourteen . . . and all of a sudden, he was playing boogie-woogie." The last to learn an instrument, Dennis never took part in the family music. Audree remembers that Dennis, before he could walk, would just sit by the front door and stare at the outside world. When he got his land legs, Dennis quickly became an outdoor person; he was (and occasionally still is) a surfer, the only true Beach Boy in the group. Besides being an outdoor type, Dennis considered himself an outsider and felt he didn't fit in with the rest of his family.

The Wilsons had a Hammond organ, and Brian remembers the days when "my brother Carl, my mother, myself, and my father used to harmonize . . . used to imitate the Four Freshmen songs." Brian's early musical influences included the Four Freshmen and the Hi-Los. Brian claims that he "was sort of patterning my life or my music around the Freshmen style. Carl was into Chuck Berry and Little Richard and things like that before I was . . . Carl was into rock and roll radio before I was. . . . So, in a sense, he got just as much [rock and roll] education as I did. He's had as many years' education in that field." Besides listening and learning, Brian was working on his own skills. By the hour, he would sing along with the Four Freshmen records, stretching his vocal range so that he developed a unique voice—he could sing high without resorting to falsetto. At the same time, he developed a beautiful, effortless falsetto that would eventually be the soaring sound of the Beach Boys records.

Murry Wilson's musical ambitions gave the young Wilson children a chance very early on to develop musical skills, and Murry welcomed their participation in his music. Once Murry's sister Emily (Mike Love's mother) gave a concert in Murry's honor. This private recital, the music equivalent of the vanity press, featured Murry's songs. They were performed by a trio that Emily hired to play at the concert, which was attended by school friends of Mrs. Love. Mike had written a song called "The Old Soldier" about a soldier that had been killed in the war. As Murry recalled, "He was only nine and a half when he wrote it. I thought it was just darling." Ever the egotistic tinkerer, Murry went home and composed new lyrics to the song because Murry felt that he heard the song as a hymn. His revised version of Mike's tune was now retitled, "By His Side," subtitled "When Jesus Calls His Soldiers." Murry taught Brian both sets of lyrics and bought his eight-year-old son his first suit with long pants. Brian sang both versions of Mike's song at the concert, and according to Murry, "he brought the house down." Later, when Mike began to sing Brian's lyrics, it would earn both of them millions of dollars.

COURTESY OF MARY SLOAN

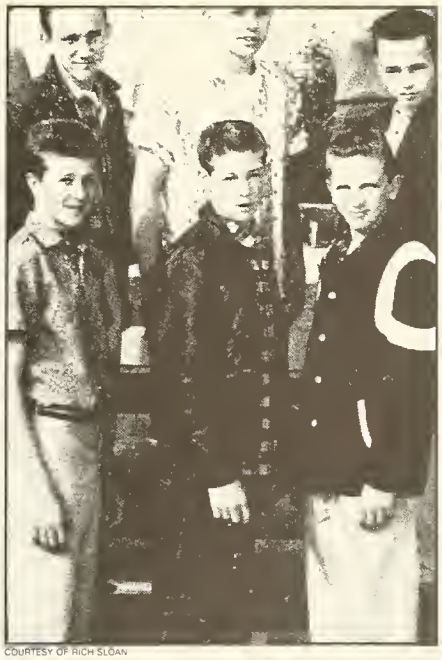
Recalling Brian's youth, Murry felt that Brian was full of early promise. Murry admitted that he was "one of those young, frightened fathers . . . but I just fell in love with him, and in three weeks, he cooed back at me and responded." According to Murry, at the age of eleven-and-a-half months, Brian could hum the entire Marine Corps Hymn.

Brian's musical skills developed quickly. Constant practice and exposure to music created a very pleasant obsession that found perfect release at the piano. There were always ideal family opportunities to display his growing talent. "Mike and Brian became close at family gatherings," Audree remembers, and they loved to sing together. "When they were real little, we [the Wilsons and the Loves] were real close and we saw them a lot. [Emily Love] always had a big Christmas party, and we'd go caroling around the neighborhood." Audree laughs, "Brian always had his solos." As the families began to grow, they also began to spend less time together. It should be noted here that Mike Love was also experiencing a difficult childhood.

Meanwhile, Brian's musical development continued unabated, aided by the radio. "In junior high school," Audree recalls, "he'd eat dinner, and he'd go into his room, and that radio would be on constantly. I remember once Murry

saying to me, 'Do you think we should worry about him?' I said, 'No. He's just loving the music.' Played it constantly." Away from the radio, Brian and Audree used to listen to records together, everything from Henry Mancini to Rosemary Clooney to the Hi-Los and, of course, the Four Freshmen.

Behind Murry Wilson's bluster was a man who could at times be incredibly thoughtful. "Brian was fourteen years old," Audree recounts, "and the Four Freshmen were at the Crescendo. Murry found out they were there and he knew Brian loved them so much. We couldn't afford, actually, for more than two of us to go at that time, so Murry took Brian and it was really a thrill." Even when Murry did something good, he managed to upset Brian's sometimes fragile tendencies. As excited as Brian was at seeing the Freshmen perform, Murry felt that meeting them in person would be an extra treat—as it was. Audree recalls, Brian "was so thrilled" but he was also "scared to death." Somehow Murry bluffed his way backstage "and got into the dressing room and introduced Brian to them." Audree corrects herself. "Introduced *them* to Brian. And I'm sure that was a highlight" of Brian's youth.



COURTESY OF RICH SLOAN

Opposite top, Mike Love at age 5. Mike was born March 15, 1941. Opposite bottom, Brian in eighth grade, spring 1956. Above, Brian in ninth grade, spring 1957. Below, High school friend Ted Sprague and Brian, '59.

"Before the Beach Boys were born," Audree remembers, "Brian used to write four-part arrangements in the style of the Four Freshmen. We had given him, for his sixteenth birthday, a tape recorder, and he and I used to sing two parts into the tape recorder," and then play back the tape and sing the other two parts along with it "so we'd have four parts." When the whole family would gather around, Brian would "teach Murry the bass line and I could read well enough to read my line, and then he would teach Carl. Dennis would never have any part of that in those days. . . . Brian would teach himself to write those parts, absolutely. He will say today that he can't write music, but that's not so. He used to make incredible arrangements, not only vocal. I have seen him do arrangements for a track with professional musicians, just incredible. And he did teach himself." Supposedly, Brian learned how to arrange instruments from one listening to a do-it-yourself record, *The Instruments of the Orchestra,* which taught the sounds of the individual instruments. Brian learned quickly in those days; he just gobbled up information, particularly when it came to music.

Brian's first public musical appear-

MILLIE ANTHONY

ances took place toward the end of his high school days. The exact chronology is impossible to pin down, but there were two particular events that stood out in the reminiscences of the Wilson family and their friends. Rich Sloan, a high school friend and classmate of Brian's, remembers that during their senior year, "Brian had written a little song for one of the girls who was running for class president, Carol Hess, whom Brian was very fond of. It was to the tune of 'Hully, Gully' . . . 'Vote for Carol, Carol Hess.' He and several underclassmen sang it at the assembly, and it went over real big." The seminal Beach Boys group also made their performing debut around this time. Brian, Mike, Carl, and a friend of Brian's formed a quartet. According to Audree Wilson, "They were asked to perform for some evening program at school. Carl said, 'No, I won't do it.' And I remember coming down kind of hard on Carl. And Brian called the group, 'Carl and the Passions.'" Everybody's memory is fuzzy on that last point. If you ask Carl, he'll say, "No, there never was a Carl and the Passions, that was just Brian putting somebody on." That sort of contradiction is fairly typical of the whole history of the group. In 1972, when the Beach Boys were searching for an album title, they decided to name their new release *Carl and the Passions—"So Tough."*

Regardless of the name of the group, Brian was spending a lot of time singing. Mike Love, looking back at the early days, recalled the many nights he and Brian "used to sing together. We'd go to Wednesday Night Youth Night at Angeles Mesa Presbyterian Church . . . after singing church songs, we'd walk home with my sister Maureen singing three-part harmony, Everly Brothers' songs." Mike and Brian also spent quite a few late nights singing with the radio. Brian would "get in his old car, it was a Nash Rambler; he would come by my place, and we would listen to the radio, play the piano, carry on and then, about eleven o'clock, my father would yell at us, 'If you're going to play that music and make a racket, get outside.' We'd go outside, and stay in the car and listen to the radio and sing. . . . Sometimes we'd spend the night in the car."

Looking back, those nights may have been just plain fun for Mike, but Brian's memories make those times sound intense. "My favorite was KFWB in Hollywood," Brian recalled. "I used to love radio anyway. Every record had something you would listen to. Every record had some kind of twist in it that gave you that feelin' you'd say, 'Oh, man.' You'd go to the piano and say, 'Now, how did they do that.' You'd start learning about it. It's an education. Anybody with a good ear is gonna pick up on those records." AM radio was kind of an underground music school that influenced all the young rock musicians in their formative years. Those countless hours spent listening to the hits would be invaluable when it came time for Brian to make his records. As Brian noted, "It was a great education to hear the radio." For Brian, it was more valuable than any classroom could ever have been.

While music was certainly important in Brian's early years, his youth was hardly all music and no play. Although Brian looks back on those times with negative feelings (particularly when it comes to his home life), a close friend of Brian's from those teenage years recalls that there was a lot of plain, uncomplicated fun. Rich Sloan is now sales manager for a Los Angeles computer company. Back in the late fifties, he and Brian spent many hours together.

Rich remembers, "Brian and I met playing Little League baseball. He played for the Seven-Up team, a bunch of losers. I don't think they ever won anything. I played for the Airport Octos, and *we* always had a very good team. Brian was a good baseball player, and he played left field. Brian's dad always used to be really interested in Brian's athletic ability; he used to stand on the left field sideline and tell Brian where to play." Murry would yell instructions like 'Play more to the left, come up, go back,' that type of thing." According to Rich, "Murry was always very helpful."

As a football player, Brian was sometimes ineffective because of his dislike of physical contact, a dislike that may have been a reaction to the childhood violence of his upbringing. Rich Sloan describes Brian's style: "Not being real aggressive, Brian didn't like to run into people, didn't really like people running into him when they would tackle him." His varsity football career wasn't a huge success, but his days on the varsity baseball team were quite impressive. "Brian could hit the ball a long way, didn't have a high batting average, but was a strong hitter. Brian played first-string varsity our senior year." That year, Brian also ended his gridiron career and ran cross-country instead. "Brian had good endur-

COURTESY OF RICH SLOAN

ance and was the type who could run all day; he had good muscle tone," Rich Sloan comments. "A lot of people today don't think of Brian as being athletic, but he was athletic by desire and by build." It has often been claimed that Brian could have been a professional baseball player. What Rich Sloan thinks is that Brian wasn't "serious enough to be totally dedicated to anything but his music."

Off the field, Brian and Rich Sloan were part of a group of friends that was developing into a close-knit pack. Rich claims that "we weren't a clique; we were just the baseball and football players and really nice girls." At a middle-class school in the fifties, the chief form of socializing was parties. "Brian was part of our group," remembers Rich. "We'd play records at the parties. Brian didn't sing or play any instrument at those get-togethers."

What Brian would do is make everybody laugh. Just like the nights with his brothers, Rich recalls that "Brian would do anything to get a laugh, even if it meant punishment to himself. . . . He got enjoyment out of seeing other people have fun. Brian liked to be part of what was happening." Brian also "liked practical jokes. But he was always a little bit shy, a little reserved even though he wanted to be more outgoing. However, once he was introduced into the group, Brian would become Brian." That last phrase crops up again and again when people try to describe what Brian Wilson was or is like. At a loss for words, people fall back on that non-explanation. What is strange is that it does make sense; it just doesn't mean anything unless you know Brian. And when you try to describe what he's like, well, Brian very often is Brian.

What is also evident is that the teenage Brian liked to be around people. With all the success of the Beach Boys, Brian still loved people, needed people, needed human contact. Even when he was isolated from most of the world, those who did see Brian say that he loved to talk . . . sometimes seriously, sometimes putting people on. Later Brian partially withdrew from people because they treated him as something special. Audree Wilson remarked that "one thing Brian says, that he wishes people would just treat him like any other guy, just down to earth. . . . He's really a very simple person." Before the mass success, Brian was liked for himself. "Everybody who knew Brian," says Rich Sloan, "whether it was a brother or a sister or your parents, they really took him in as one of the family. Brian liked to be liked by parents, liked to be liked by anybody."

Brian's affable personality often got him in trouble, particularly when he became the butt of a practical joke. Rich Sloan remembers "one time when we were in the showers. There were about five or six showers in a big stall area, and then there'd be a wall and five more showers. After baseball practice one day these guys were throwing wet gym towels over the wall. They were pretty heavy and they could hurt a guy 'cause they were tied up in knots. So Brian said, 'Next time they throw one over, I'll hit my hand against the wall and lie down on the floor and you tell everybody that I was knocked out.' . . . Sure enough, here comes a towel, Brian bangs the wall and lies down in the middle of the floor with all the water running all over him. So I hollered, 'Hey, Brian's hurt! You guys come here quick.' So everybody comes running over, Brian's the center of attention. Brian's down there with all the water spraying all over him, and everyone's looking at him. So I thought, 'What would really make this funny would be if I urinated on him.' And everyone's laughing. Brian thinks everyone's laughing at him. When he found out the truth, he wasn't too pleased but that was a joke, and he got over it because he was the center of attention. Brian never was one to carry a grudge."

Rich Sloan was a great instigator. He tells the story of "another time [when] we were out on the Wilsons' front lawn. Brian, Dennis, myself, and maybe Carl were out there, and Brian's dad asked Dennis to get his pipe. By the time he

COURTESY OF RICH SLOAN

COURTESY OF RICH SLOAN

Opposite, Brian slides into second base as Rich Sloan applies the tag, spring 1960. Above, Brian is number fifty-one, fall 1957. Right, Brian, spring 1959. Brian: "'Rock Around The Clock' shocked me; I was so electrified by that."

brought the pipe out of the house, Brian's dad had gone into the garage. I told Dennis, 'Hey, give me the pipe.' We took it and filled it with grass [from the lawn], and we put the tobacco on top of it. We gave it to Murry, and he was puffing on it, and he broke it apart and pulled the filter out and put the filter back in and started puffing again. Nothing. All the time, we're there snickering. That was the kind of humor Brian liked."

Rich Sloan recalls one trick the guys would pull on Brian. "Brian drove a '51 Mercury, and we used to come up to stoplights and we'd holler out to the car next to us, 'Hey, you son of a bitch,' and we'd all duck down. So this guy would look over and see Brian by himself, and Brian would panic."

When Brian was with Rich Sloan, he consistently ended up with the short end of the stick. "One time, Brian and I went to St. Vincent's Hospital to visit his cousin. We couldn't find her room, and we were just looking around the hospital. I forget how it came up, but it was decided that I would wrap up Brian's head in toilet paper, making him look like a patient, and walk him down the corridors of the hospital. We got on the elevator, and Brian could see just a little bit out of one eye, and there was a doctor in there and Brian didn't know what to do. Obviously, a doctor could look at a guy's head and know it was wrapped in toilet paper, so we got off at the next floor."

Brian seems to have had a special talent for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Rich Sloan remembers one trip home after a baseball game in Culver City. "We would always drive our cars to the baseball game; mine was the lead car. We had this thing called a Chinese Fire Drill. When we would stop at a red light, everybody would get out of the car, run around it, the light would turn green and everybody would pile back into the car. So we pulled up to this red light (and we were in our baseball uniforms), and we started running around the car. Steve Anderson's car was next in line, and they started running around the car. Brian's car was next in line, and I'll never forget this, I go to get in my car, and I look up and see Brian had jumped up on the hood of Steve's car and was jumping up and down. Brian's dancing on the top of this car, and our coach pulls up right alongside. Brian looked over and saw the coach and slid down the windshield of Steve's car and went back into his car, and we all took off. Needless to say, the coach wasn't happy at all. He said, 'My wife thought it was pretty funny until I told her you all had on Hawthorne High uniforms.' From then on, we took buses to the games."

On occasion, Brian would get back at Rich. "The first time I met Mrs. Wilson, Brian and I were in their family room. Audree [then] was a fairly good-sized woman; she might have been forty or fifty pounds overweight. So she appeared, and Brian said, 'Oh, Mom, I'd

Opposite, Brian's inscription in Rich Sloan's senior yearbook. Below, On Senior Ditch Day spring 1960, Rich splattered disappearing ink on Brian's shirt. Pictured: Kneeling in front—Lorraine Churik. Front row from left to right—Glenda Cook, Teresa Kara, Karen Darnell, Janet Haynes, Linda Crow, Carol Hess, and Brian. Back row—Carol Mountain, Patsy Bell, David Hoel, Pat Oravetz, and Robin Hood.

RICH SLOAN

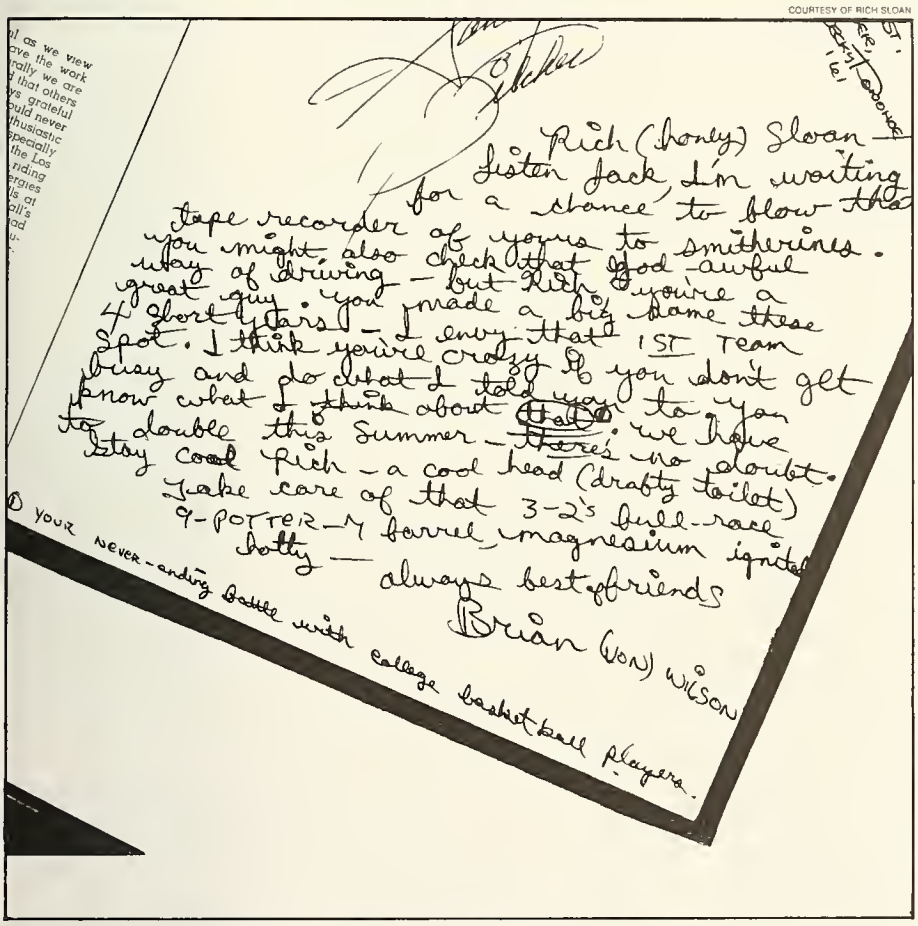
like you to meet Rich.' And she said, 'Hi, Rich,' and Brian said, 'Oh, yeah, mom, Rich thinks you're overweight and ought to go to Vic Tanny's [a health spa].' And I said, 'Wait a minute!' but Mrs. Wilson interrupted and said, 'That's okay, Rich, I know my son.'" Those times that Rich was the victim were rare.

According to Rich, "Brian's whole life-being was very casual and fun-loving . . . nothing really serious was Brian's way of doing things. Brian's nature was just to be honest, play fair, play hard, and enjoy it for what it's worth." Because Brian was so easy-going, he "used to allow people to take advantage of him. If there were four people and Brian wanted to go to the beach and someone else wanted to play miniature golf, Brian would always go along with the other guy's wishes. He wanted to be a part of it." Brian, it seems, could be convinced to do most anything. Rich recalls that whether "it was running a mile or having a party at Brian's house, he would go along with whatever you wanted. But everybody wanted Brian around. He was always a lot of fun."

Brian was a true innocent, and he was often pretty gullible, but despite everything, his basic sweetness came through. Because of his good nature, his friends often took advantage of him. Some guy would say, "Hey Brian, why don't you sit out in the car while we go in and have a coke or something and make sure the engine doesn't stop." Rich notes that Brian wasn't taken in—not always anyway. "Sometimes, he would do this just to pacify whoever he was with. In that respect, he hasn't changed very much."

In Brian's senior year, he took a music class that required each student to write a sonata for the final project. Brian's sonata, according to Audree, was definitely *not* "Surfin'." Whatever it was has been lost in time, but Brian did share some unusual music with Rich Sloan, such as that better-left-unknown tune, "Larry, Larry Dingleberry." In the Sloan's family room there was a piano, and as Rich recounts, "Brian would come over and play his boogie-woogie. I enjoyed it very much, and if you enjoyed hearing it, Brian would play it as long as he could, and at such a fierce pace and for such a long duration that his forearm muscles would get hard as rocks. He would just bang on the piano and play a couple of songs, nothing serious, but he liked to play the piano, not so people would say, 'Look how great he is.' He just wanted people to recognize what he could do and enjoy what he was doing, share with other people what he could do." In April 1959, Rich recorded Brian at the piano. It is a unique tape in that it is the only recorded evidence of Brian's boogie-woogie piano playing. It is fascinating to hear Brian playing the piano in a style that never became an obvious part of his Beach Boys work.

COURTESY OF RICH SLOAN


Rich (honey) Sloan —
Listen Jack, I'm waiting
for a chance to blow that
tape recorder of yours to smitherines.
you might also check that God awful
way of driving — but Rich you're a
great guy. you made a big name these
4 short years — I envy that 1ST Team
Spot. I think you're crazy if you don't get
busy and do what I told you to. you
know what I think about that. we have
to double this Summer — there's no doubt.
Stay cool Rich — a cool head (drafty toilet)
Take care of that 3-2's bull-race
9-POTTER-7 barrel, magnesium ignited
hotty — always best of friends
Brian (VON) WILSON
① YOUR NEVER-ending battle with college basketball players.

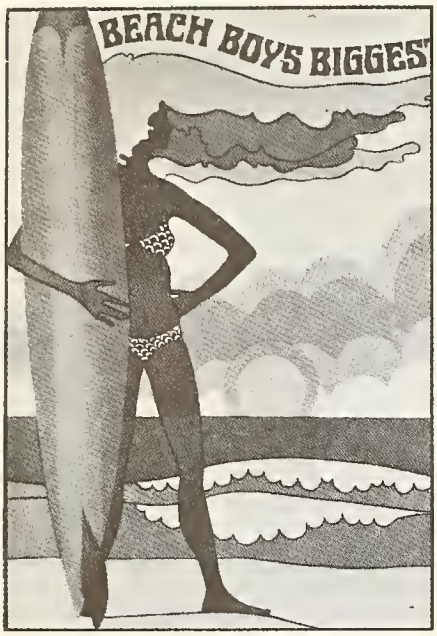
On that same tape, Rich Sloan's ancient recorder also captured a teenage Brian that is often lost with all the talk of musical genius, mental problems, and drug abuse. Rich and Brian's conversation reminds us how typical Brian was. The discussion, as you might expect, centered around girls. Brian and Rich talk about whom they planned to take to the prom and other personal matters that can only be important to a teenage heart. There's the usual assortment of four-letter words and game-playing, but what the tape shows above all is that Brian was a pretty normal kid—whatever that means.

Still, Brian's childhood was filled with enough trauma that when he was placed in the role of a father he virtually abdicated all responsibility. As Marilyn Wilson (Brian's wife) recalled, Brian demanded that Marilyn discipline the kids because he was afraid he would do it wrong. Marilyn felt that this was "because he had it really rough, he didn't want to do the same things to his kids, therefore he backed out of it totally. . . . He didn't have an easy childhood."

Murry Wilson was the dominant personality in the lives of his sons, and they never emerged from the shadow of his control. Murry made his presence felt throughout their career, and if he wasn't always by their side physically, his spirit was always a part of their personalities.

As Brian rounded the corner into adulthood, emotional problems began to stalk his path. As a youth, Brian had friends who fondly remember him as a "regular guy." At home, banging at the piano, listening to records or the radio, singing with his mother—music had become Brian's best friend.

There was still no indication that Brian would devote his life to music. At that point, music was just his favorite escape. In time, it would be his only refuge.

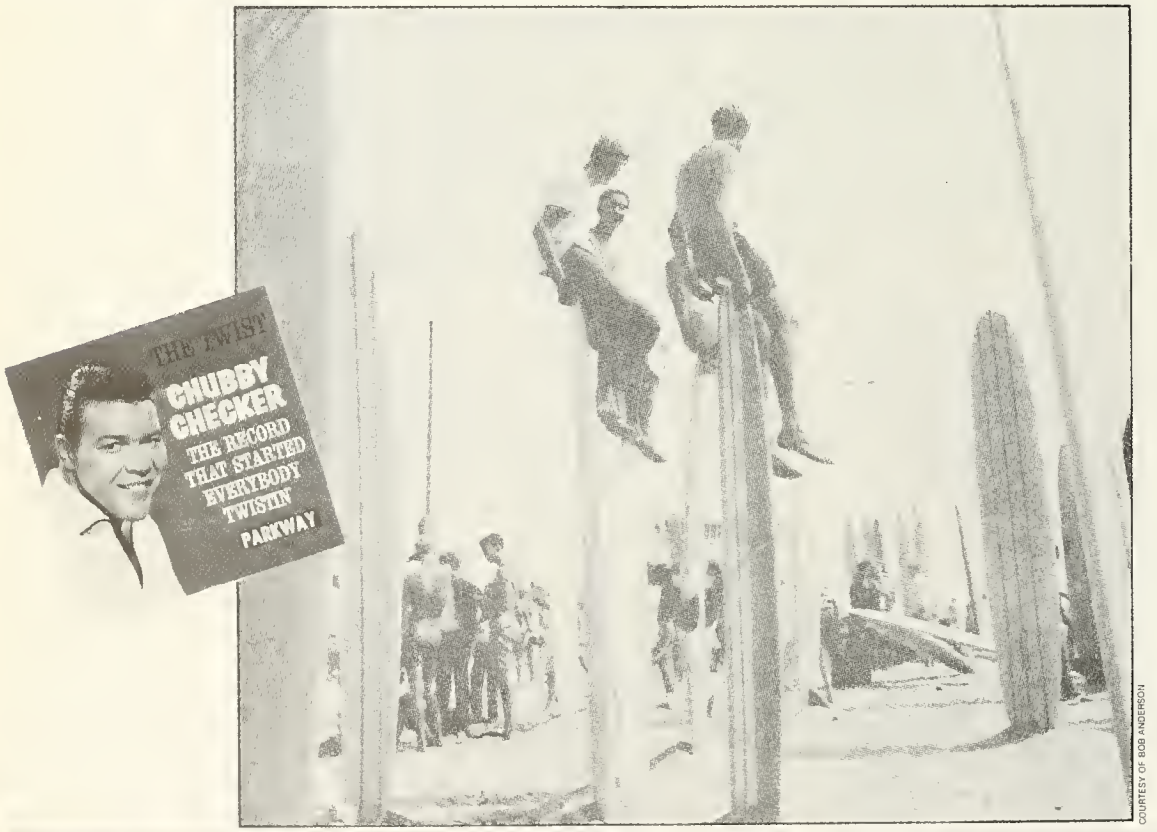


The way Brian Wilson remembers it, the creation of his "California Sound" was as quick as it was easy. "One day, my brother Dennis came home from the beach and said, 'Hey, surfing's getting really big. You guys ought to write a song about it.'" So Brian and cousin Mike Love composed a primitive tune called, not surprisingly, "Surfin'," and it became an instant hit in Los Angeles.

Was it that simple? Yes and no. Success came painlessly to the Beach Boys; there was no "dues-paying" period while they honed their craft before taking it to the general public. The Beach Boys came into being before the guys could really play their instruments. Maybe it's appropriate that the world's most famous vocal group made it with amateur instrumentation.

Nineteen sixty-one was the year of the birth of the Beach Boys. As might be expected, the early history of a group as renowned as the Beach Boys has taken on mythic proportions. Each Beach Boy, their families and associates have told the story many times. However, nobody tells it exactly the same way. Fortunately, the actual details aren't as significant as the verifiable facts. That is, the Wilson Brothers, Mike Love, and friend Al Jardine recorded a song called "Surfin'," the group was named the Beach Boys, and it was the beginning of the most successful career ever enjoyed by an American group.

For the Beach Boys, though, 1961 was mostly a year of false starts, of groups with names like "Kenny and the Cadets" and "The Pendletones" . . . of kids on a lark, forming a band, making a record. The year ended with the first live performance of a group that was called "The Beach Boys."

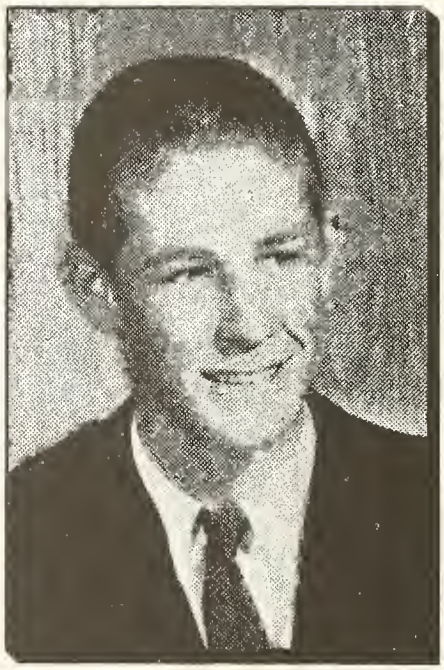


COURTESY OF RICH SLOAN

Above, From the Hawthorne High 1960 yearbook, El Camino. Opposite top, from the cover of Beach Boys Biggest Beach Hits. *Opposite bottom, Surfing, circa 1960, was mostly an adult sport. In 1961, it became a West Coast teenage phenomenon. Opposite inset, Chubby Checker and the Twist, a dance craze that engulfed both kids and their parents.*

2.
FIVE FRESHMEN

Until the 1960s, California was never very important to the music world. New York was the center, whether it was "Tin Pan Alley" or its obvious successor, the Brill Building. In 1961, all the hits seemed to emerge from this one Manhattan locale. This centralized source of songs joined forces with the powerful network television exposure of Dick Clark's "American Bandstand" to dominate the teen sounds.


COURTESY OF RICH SLOAN

It should be remembered that the beginning of that decade was easily the nadir for memorable rock and roll. Elvis had gone Hollywood . . . Buddy Holly had been killed in a plane crash . . . Others, like Chuck Berry, had made their statements. Greasy Philadelphia kids like Fabian and Frankie Avalon had been propelled into stardom by the aforementioned axis of musical power. Chubby Checker made the only noticeable sociological impact that year. His recording of Hank Ballard's "The Twist" launched America's teenagers on a chain of dance crazes that wasn't finally broken until the arrival of the Beatles.

Back in California, the not-yet Beach Boys didn't really care for many of 1960s East Coast records; what was happening on "American Bandstand" wasn't vital, wasn't important. The influences on the Beach Boys, from Chuck Berry to the Four Freshmen, were pretty much set. An occasional newcomer like Dion or Dylan would become meaningful, but mostly the Beach Boys were children of the fifties' rock and roll explosion. The fact that the current music was so dismal may have been one reason for starting a group. More likely, the Beach Boys happened because Brian Wilson wanted and needed a vehicle for his emerging songwriting and performing skills.

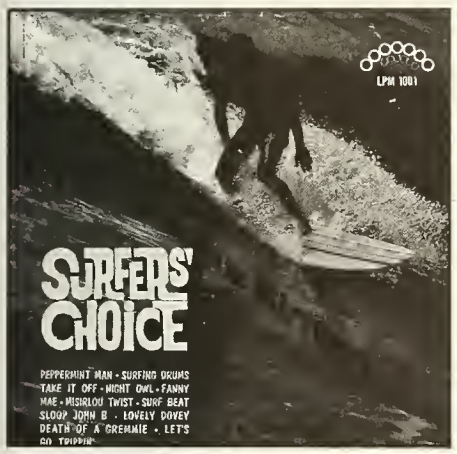
Before the Beach Boys hit, Brian took two minor potshots at record-making, two discs that are now only footnotes to his musical history. One was "Barbie," performed by Kenny and the Cadets. Brian was Kenny; Audree and a friend of Brian's were the Cadets. The other record was "The Surfer Moon" by Bob and Sheri. Bob was Bob Norberg, Brian's first roommate outside of the Wilson house. Sheri was Bob's girlfriend.

While neither record was memorable, both played valuable roles in the Beach Boys' history. The Kenny and the Cadets record is crucial because it brought Brian in close, professional contact with Hite and Dorinda Morgan. Hite Morgan's Guild Music was the publisher of a few of Murry Wilson's songs, and Hite was the Beach Boys' first producer and publisher. The significance of "The Surfer Moon" lies in another area. The record was the first to bear the credit "Produced by Brian Wilson." In the years to come, Brian's credit on a Beach Boys single or album was a sign of excellence. More than that, when Brian's credit disappeared from the Beach Boys records, they stopped having hits.

In examining the pre-Beach Boys days, the most striking element is the total ordinariness of the situation. There was really no reason to believe that something of consequence was about to happen.

Brian, for instance, was going to El Camino Junior College and taking a lot of psychology courses. Most of the great pop composers of the sixties and seventies had little formal musical education, and Brian was no exception. Oddly enough, it may have been a music course that helped drive Brian out of school. "In college, I took a music appreciation course," Brian told an interviewer in 1964. "The teachers were one hundred percent against anything except operas, symphonies, cantatas, chamber and classical stuff. Well, I wasn't going to sit there and let any guy tell me that pop music is bad. I love both. After a year and a half, I became a college dropout and I'm not sorry. My hunger for knowledge is very strong, but I can learn more through self-study."

The other almost-Beach Boys were also experiencing difficulties. Al Jardine was a college classmate of Brian's, but the



rest of the guys had very little classroom learning. Carl eventually graduated from Hollywood's Professional High School (after being kicked out of Hawthorne High for various disciplinary infractions). Dennis consistently resisted the textbooks. As for Mike, a graduate of nearby Dorsey High, Ph.D.s weren't exactly in his future. The oldest Beach boy, Mike was already part of the adult world. "Before the group," Mike joked, "I was in the oil business. 'Gas and oil, check the tires.' I was a sheet-metal apprentice at my father's factory, too. I was married [the first of three marriages for Mike]. I married a cheerleader when I was twenty and she was eighteen . . . we 'had to' get married." Looking back on an obviously hard time, Mike is full of wisdom. A shotgun marriage, according to Mike, "is in the Great American Way. That's where we glean our experience." Maybe, but being married meant two jobs for Mike, two jobs to quit when the Beach Boys became a reality.

Because Mike Love was the first of the Beach Boys to accept adult responsibilities, it is understandable that he would be the first to grasp the importance of money. More than anybody in the group, Mike was concerned with commerce in the early years of the Beach Boys. In later years, his stress on formula success would end his close friendship with Brian. In 1961, though, it was okay to want money.

Still, there was no indication of impending success and wealth. Brian remembers "we never fantasized" about there being a group. "That developed very quickly, over a period of weeks, when I was about nineteen years old. . . . We kind of developed into a group sort of through the wishes of Dennis. He said that . . . the kids at school knew I was musical because I had done some singing for assemblies and so on. And he said, 'Why don't you write a song about surfing?' because surfing was becoming a big fad. So, it happened that we got together and Mike Love came up with 'bop-bop-dit-dit,' you know, that Jan and Dean-type riff. And I came up with some of the background music, and we just flowed right into a career from nowhere. It was just an amazing start."

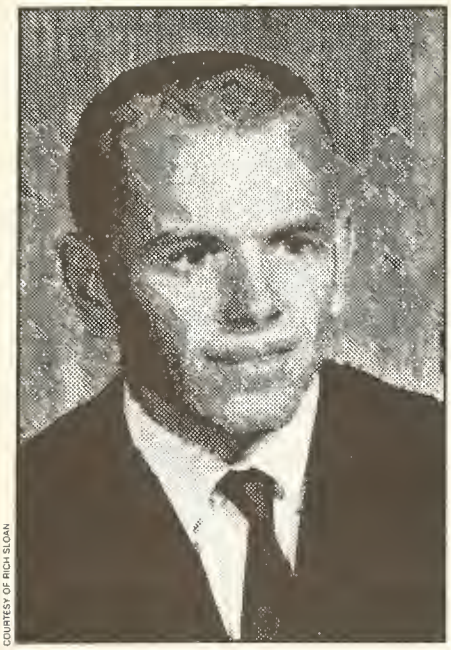
One problem that had plagued the Wilson/Love singing group was the constant search for a fifth voice. Al Jardine, the only original Beach Boy who wasn't family, was a student at El Camino when Brian was there. One day they ran into each other on campus and decided to do some singing. "The next day," Al recalled, "in the nurses' room of the college . . . we got together [with] a football player, some deep bass singer who couldn't carry a tune, one of my friends from early high school days. . . . We all sang anything we could think of. Well, that group didn't cut it too well. So Brian said, 'Hey, my little brother Carl can really sing, he's really good.' And I said, 'Him? Are you kidding?' . . . He says, 'My cousins Mike and Maureen, they can sing too. And there's Dennis . . .' So we went over to Brian's the day after that and met Mike and Dennis and Carl." Brian had written "a couple of songs about a girl that he was going out with." One was "Judy" and the other was "Surfer Girl." Both songs were written for Judy Bowles, Brian's first serious girlfriend, who eventually broke his heart.

Mike Love remembers that Al Jardine's

Opposite, Brian's Senior Yearbook picture, spring 1960. Above, The flip side of "Barbie," which is the first known recording of Brian singing. Below, Bob Norberg wrote a few songs with Brian. Left, Dick Dale was the real King of Surf Music.

arrival on the scene was the final solution to their search for a fifth voice. Al's voice fit in perfectly. The players were now all set. Murry Wilson remembered that it was in "early 1961 when Mike Love and Al Jardine were coming over to the house and Brian was teaching them songs, with Carl. They sang Four Freshmen songs almost like the Four Freshmen, except they had a sweeter, younger sound." Interestingly, Dennis was not part of the singing.

In either late summer or early fall, the Beach Boys became, if not a reality, at least a possibility. Audree Wilson begins the story. "We had guests from England. We took them to Mexico City for a three-day trip, and left the refrigerator stocked. We left them adequate money if they chose to eat out." Carl Wilson remembers that amount to be $800, a rather unlikely figure, but he tells what happened after their parents went on their



COURTESY OF RICH SLOAN

vacation. "The day after they left, we all went down to a music store and got instruments with our food money. . . . I was gonna play guitar, Alan could play stand-up bass, Brian could play keyboards already . . . Dennis just chose the drums. And then Brian said, 'I'm gonna play bass and you play guitar and then it'll be a rock sound, be rock and roll.' Michael didn't play anything, but he got a saxophone, he thought he'd play sax, but Mike never practiced." Carl noted, "The group really learned how to play after we made records."

It's Audree Wilson's turn again. "We barely got in the door, and they said, 'We've got something to play for you.' Well, we saw all this stuff . . . and they had an act . . . and that's when 'Surfin'' was born, that's when they sang it and put it together. . . . It was a lot of fun, but they were serious about it. They were having fun, but yet they wanted to do something with it. They were just very excited."

COURTESY OF RICH SLOAN

Nothing more might have happened except that Al's interest in folk music brought the guys into the studio. Audree recalls that one day "Alan came over, and he had a folk song he wanted to record. He asked Murry what to do, and he [Murry] said, 'Go see Hite.'" Gary Winfrey, a lifelong friend of Al's, remembers that he and Al "invited Brian to help sing the song, because we couldn't play and sing at the same time." Brian brought a friend of his, Keith Lent, and the four of them went to Hite Morgan's studio and recorded a song about the Rio Grande. Sometime after that, as Audree Wilson remembers, Brian, Mike, Carl, and Al were at the Morgans' studio recording a demo when they said, "We want to play this for you." Dorinda Morgan was willing to listen, and what she heard really excited her, Audree recalls. "Immediately, she said, 'Drop everything, we want to record that!' He [Hite] wasn't so much in favor of it, but she heard something she thought would click." The song was "Surfin'," and the recording featured a Mike Love vocal, Carl on guitar, Al on stand-up bass, and Brian playing drums on either a garbage pail cover or a pie tin. This first-ever group effort did not include Dennis because he was not part of the group. It was Audree who made the guys accept Dennis as part of what was happening. After all, it was only fair. Dennis had suggested they write the song about surfing in the first place.

Of course, having cut a tune for a publisher didn't mean it would automatically be released as a record, but Hite Morgan had connections with Candix Records, and the group was signed to Candix. One small detail remained. What was to be the name of the group? The guys opted for "The Pendletones" in honor of their favorite Pendleton shirts. The people at Candix didn't like that. Fortunately, their choice, "The Surfers," was short-lived. How it became the Beach Boys was a beautiful accident that may have saved the group from the junkpile of fads and one-hit wonders. If they had been named the Surfers, they would have been restricted to only surfing records. At least a more generic name like "The Beach Boys" allowed

'We got so excited hearing our record on the radio that Carl threw up. I ran down the street screaming.'

COURTESY OF THE BEACH BOYS

us Forty Survey

G DECEMBER 29, 1961

T EK			LAST WEEK
21.	YOUR MA SAID YOU CRIED	Kenny Dino—Musicor	20
22.	TOWN WITHOUT PITY	Gene Pitney—Musicor	18
23.	UNCHAIN MY HEART	Ray Charles—ABC/Par	24
24.	MOMENTS TO REMEMBER	Jennell Hawkins—Amazon	26
25.	*JINGLE BELL ROCK	Bobby Rydell-Chubby Checker—Cameo	35
26.	I DON'T KNOW WHY	Linda Scott—Can-Am	19
27.	*SURFERS STOMP	The Mar-Kets—Liberty	Debut
28.	*WHEN THE BOY IN YOUR ARMS	Connie Francis—MGM	23
29.	*SMALL SAD SAM	Phil McLean—Versatile	36
30.	*POCKETFUL OF MIRACLES	Frank Sinatra—Reprise	34
31.	JUST OUT OF REACH	Solomon Burke—Atlantic	31
32.	*BIG BAD JOHN	Jimmy Dean—Columbia	30
33.	*SURFIN'	The Beachboys—Candix	Debut
34.	*AND THEN CAME LOVE	Ed Townsend—Challenge	32
35.	*JAMBALAYA	Fats Domino—Imperial	Debut
36.	TONIGHT	Ferrante & Teicher—United Artists	28
37.	THE WANDERER	Dion—Laurie	Debut
38.	CRAZY	Patsy Cline—Decca	33
39.	REVENGE	Brook Benton—Mercury	29
40.	*DEAR IVAN	Jimmy Dean—Columbia	Debut

ST HEARD ON KFWB

them the flexibility to record songs about an entire lifestyle and not just the surfing aspect of beach life.

Russ Regan, now a major figure in the recording industry, was just starting out in late 1961. His career as a recording artist had been fairly dismal, and he was working for Buckeye Record Distributors, which distributed Candix. Regan remembered that the "A and R [Artists and Repertoire] man over there was a friend of mine named Joe Saraceno. He called me to play a record over the telephone. So I listened, and I thought, 'Wow, it sounds like a Jan and Dean record. [It is interesting that the Beach Boys began by borrowing from Jan and Dean. Jan and Dean would return the favor many times in the future.] So I said, 'Who is it?' And he said, 'It's a new group we're signing over here at Candix; they're called The Surfers.' And I said, 'Joe, you can't call them The Surfers. There's a group over on Hi-Fi Records called The Surfers. They're from Hawaii.' And he said, 'You know something, you're right. I forgot about that. We're gonna have to come up with a name.' So I laughingly said, 'Why don't you call them the Lifeguards or the Beach Bums, the Woodies, anything to do with the beach.' So finally I said, 'I got it, why don't you name them the Beach Boys!' "

Although the group reportedly didn't like the name at first, they accepted it. The name was really a perfect fit for the music, an ideal reflection of the lifestyle. When the music eventually changed, the name became an albatross. Released on December 8, 1961, "Surfin'," according to Russ Regan, "actually exploded here in the city of Los Angeles. Their record was a big record here. It was just a natural Southern California record."

Opposite (clockwise from top right): The Beach Boys first record "Surfin'" was released on both X and Candix. Most record collectors believe that the X release was first. Dennis describes the radio debut of "Surfin'." Al Jardine on the track team and in his senior yearbook picture, Hawthorne High, spring 1960. Above left, Dennis at Hawthorne High's 1958 prom. Above right, the Beach Boys enter L.A. KFWB's hit charts.

For Dennis Wilson, nothing has equaled "the first time we ever heard our record played [on the radio]. We [Carl, Dennis, Brian, and David Marks] were all on Hawthorne Boulevard in Brian's 1957 Ford . . . they said, 'Here's a group from Hawthorne, California, The Beach Boys, with their song, "Surfin'." It was a contest; they played three songs and the one that got the most requests over the phone was the one they would add to the playlist. We were screamin' in the street, and knockin' on everybody's door, '*We* got a record on the radio!' . . . That was the biggest high ever. Nothing will ever top the expression on Brian's face. Ever . . . THAT is the all-time moment."

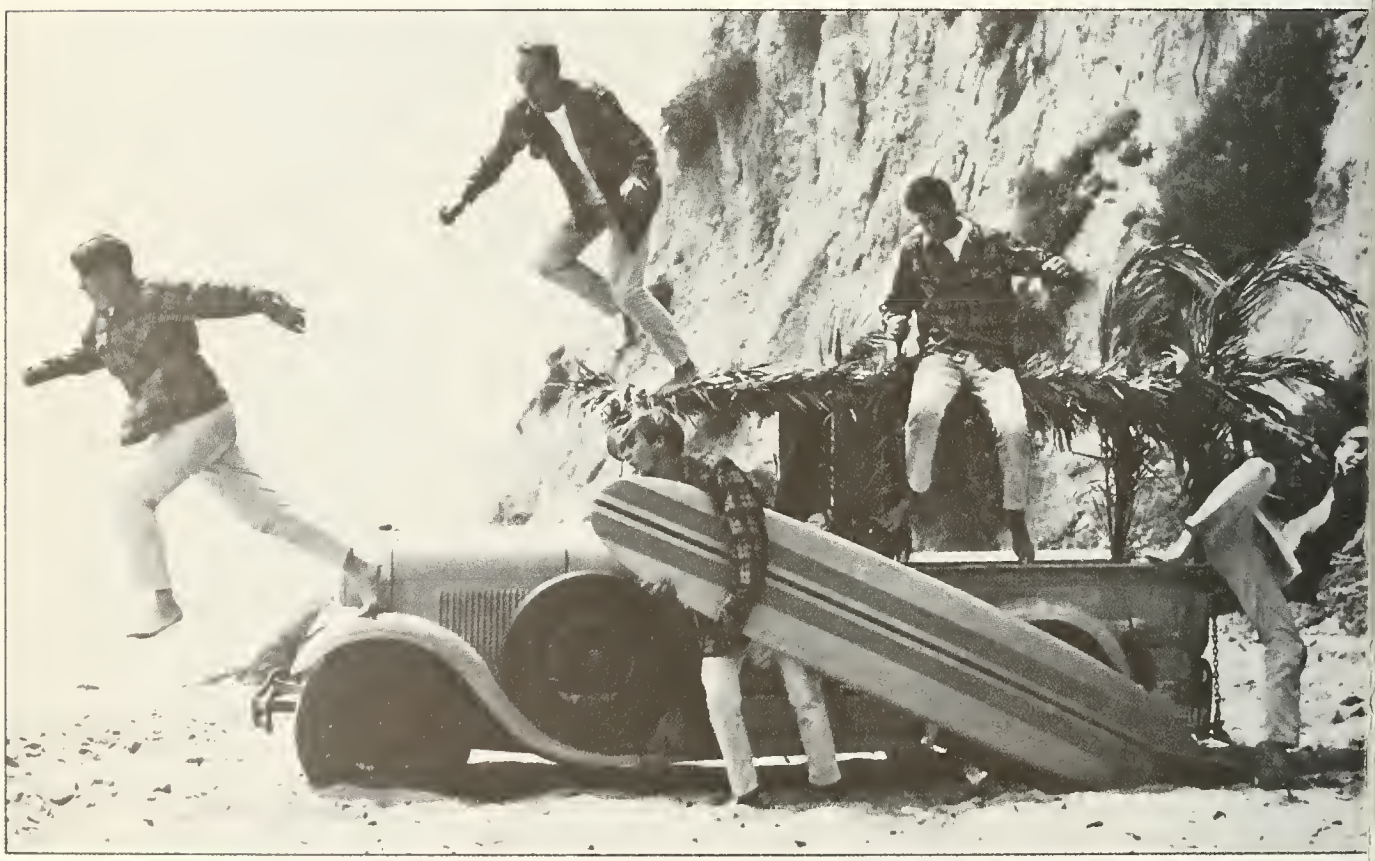
Their recording and radio careers underway, the Beach Boys were ready for their first public performance. On New Year's Eve, 1961, the Beach Boys played three tunes at the Long Beach Municipal Auditorium. Mike Love recalled that "we got three hundred dollars to play a Richie Valens Memorial dance. I can still remember it because we got paid for something besides working, which was really a trip. We got paid for playing music."

As 1962 began, the Beach Boys had a name and a hit, but they were soon to be without a record label. Record companies weren't exactly breaking down the door at the Wilson residence. The industry feeling was that surfing was just a fad, and one wonders if the group would ever have gotten a recording contract without the persistence of Murry Wilson.

Years later, Brian would take note of his Dad's push and recognize its importance. As a father, Murry may not have been ideal, but as a manager of a rock group, he had unrelenting drive and ambition. He hadn't made it as a songwriter; no matter, his boys would make up for his failure. He'd see to that—and he did.

This second year of the Beach Boys' existence would enable them to prove that the success of "Surfin'" wasn't just a fluke. The history of popular music is littered with groups and solo artists who have one or two hits and forever disappear. What separated the Beach Boys from that scrap heap were two very disparate elements—Murry Wilson's perseverance and Brian Wilson's musical talent. It was this strange brew of ego and ability combined with events that brought the Wilson family to the threshold of major success in the record business.

For the Beach Boys, 1962 was filled with growing pains, but it was also full of success—hit singles, club dates, recording contracts and personnel changes . . . the Beach Boys were in their youth.



COURTESY OF FRED VAIL

EDWARD VANDEGRIFT

EDWARD VANDEGRIFT

Opposite top, One of the first publicity pictures of the group. David Marks is the newest Beach Boy, in the middle in front of the board. Opposite bottom, The Beach Boys jump off a woodie and head for the surf. Above top, Mike Love and sax, Brian, David Marks, and Carl at a U.C.L.A. dance, early summer 1962. Above bottom, At the same hop, the group coaxes two twisting students. Dennis is second from the left.

3.
LET'S GO SURFIN'

The Beach Boys' first hit, "Surfin'," made it into the top three in the L.A. radio hit charts, and peaked in *Billboard* magazine's national charts at 75. The record sold somewhere between ten and fifty thousand copies, and the group received a check for less than a thousand dollars. Murry Wilson generously added a few dollars from his own pocket to make the total an even thousand, so that each Beach Boy got two hundred dollars.

EDWARD VANDECRIFT

One of the earliest Beach Boys concerts took place in the early spring of 1962. William F. Williams, one of the disc-jockeys at KMEN in San Bernadino recalls that time. "We at KMEN were one of the first stations to play the Beach Boys records, and San Bernadino was a big Beach Boys town. Harris department store had a 'Deb-Teens' department and the girls at the area high schools who bought their clothes there became members of a 'club.' Harris had a fashion show / concert each year for the girls who were members. KMEN was in charge of putting together the talent for Harris's concert, and I remember Murry Wilson came to us and literally begged us to let the Beach Boys be the opening act. As I recall, they barely knew which end of the guitar case was up. They looked very badly, played very badly, and sang very badly."

Candix Records was having financial trouble, and it folded sometime before the summer of 1962. Russ Regan remembers that "Candix sold their masters to ERA Records. Because of that, Murry had the right to terminate. They had a clause in their contract that the Beach Boys couldn't be sold to another record company." Without a label, Brian was concerned over the future of the group. Audree remembers that Brian asked his father for help. "We're really serious; we want to make more records . . . Would you please help us?" Actually Murry had already assumed the reins. Although he never liked "Surfin'" (he called it "rude" and "crude"), he took charge from the very moment he smelled success. Brian recalled Murry's reaction to "Surfin'," a record with no overdubs or hint of sophisticated recording techniques. "We did it all live. Our mix wasn't as good [as today's mix], it wasn't as balanced. You couldn't hear the guitar playing . . . you didn't hear the bass notes as well . . . some of the vocals were a little buried. It wasn't mixed and balanced very well. And my father was critical of the first thing we did, he said, 'Well, look, you don't hear the guitar, you don't hear this, what is going on here? Listen, I'm going to have to take over as producer,' which he did. He took over as producer." Offering help and encouragement, Murry horned in on the action. Without Murry's presence, there might never have been even one record. With Murry, there was at least one adult who believed in the Beach Boys.

Hite Morgan was still the group's publisher, so he and Murry began a search for a new recording deal. The group also went into Western Studios and cut a number of songs (probably "Surfer Girl," "Judy," "The Surfer

Moon," "Surfin' Safari" and "409"), which Hite and Murry used to help sell the group.

Russ Regan, who had become Murry's confidant in the record business, recalls that Murry didn't want to sign with another company as small as Candix; "He wanted to be with a big company." So Regan sent the demo of "Surfin' Safari" to Wink Martindale, who was then an A & R man at Dot Records. According to Regan, Wink "heard the record, loved the record and played it for his boss. His boss turned it down because he felt that surfing music was just a flash in the pan."

Audree Wilson remembers that Murry and Hite "cooled their heels at Dot and Decca and Liberty." Murry recalled in 1971 what had come next. "Finally, I asked Mr. Morgan what we should do. He says, 'I don't know, Murry, you're their dad and manager, rots of ruck to you.' And he says good-bye." Nine years after the fact, Murry would still gloat: "That cost him two million, seven hundred thousand dollars, that statement. It cost him," Murry repeated, "two million, seven hundred thousand dollars." Murry, of course, was referring to the income that Morgan would have made as the publisher of Brian Wilson's songs.

At the same time that the Beach Boys were searching for a record deal, they were undergoing their first line-up change. Al Jardine felt that the financial future of being a Beach Boy wasn't all that promising, and he quit the group and returned to college with the intention of eventually going to dental school.

Taking Al's place was a neighbor of the Wilsons', fifteen-year-old David Marks, a youngster who fit well into the group. Audree Wilson, however, claims that "David played at guitar." According to Audree, "Brian would not allow him to sing on record because he couldn't sing. . . . David was a pain in the neck, he really was. He would drive everyone crazy." There are also reports that David's mother, Joanne, was bent on making David a star, and that she and the Wilsons clashed frequently. Nick Venet, who supervised production on the Beach Boys' early Capitol albums, recalls that Marks was as musically competent as all of the other Beach Boys (except Brian).

For the moment, nevertheless, Marks was a full-fledged Beach Boy. And when the group finally signed a contract with Capitol Records, it was David Marks, not Al Jardine, who was the fifth Beach Boy. By late '63, Al Jardine had replaced Marks on a permanent basis, and David Marks was relegated to the land of trivia contests.

The signing of the Beach Boys to Capitol Records in mid-1962 was a key element of the success story. Without a major label, these five potential rock stars probably wouldn't have made it. Brian might have had success as a composer, but it is unlikely that the others would have had musical careers. But that is all idle speculation because the group did sign with Capitol.

Above, The Beach Boys visit the Pacific Ocean for a photo session. That's Brian on the left, hanging back, while the others rush to meet a wave. Left, (pictured from left to right): Nick Venet, two of the Lettermen (whom Venet once produced), Dick Clark, and Capitol promotion man Bruce Davidson. Venet recalls that Davidson was the one man at Capitol who really believed in the Beach Boys' first Capitol record before it was a hit. Opposite, Brian.

Russ Regan: "I had written and done some songs with Nick Venet, so I told Murry, 'Look, go over to see Nick Venet at Capitol because I think this is something Nick'll really go for.' . . .The rest is history."

Nick Venet was a twenty-one-year-old staff producer at Capitol Records in 1962, and was one of the few men in the record business who seemed to understand the importance of "teen" music. As a producer, he had already achieved some success at Capitol, but in those days, the record producer wasn't very involved. Sometimes, the producer's most important role was just deciding which songs the artist should record. These "producers" were sometimes called A and R men.

It was into this world that Murry Wilson brought a demonstration record. That same day, he emerged from the Capitol Tower with a recording contract for the Beach Boys. Nick Venet was the man responsible for signing the Beach Boys to Capitol. Nick, however, is not a man that the Wilson family remembers fondly. Because Venet has been outspoken about his dealings with Murry Wilson and his role in the early Beach Boys' records, he is disliked by the Wilsons.

The relationship got off to a shaky start. Murry had called for an appointment, and Nick asked Mr. Wilson to wait for two weeks because he was on his way to Nashville on business. Nick feels that Murry was insulted by the delay. They finally got together at the Capitol Tower and Murry played the demonstration record. As Venet remembered, "Every once in a while as a producer . . . before the second eight bars have spun around, you know that the record is a number-one record." Venet was talking about "Surfin' Safari." He recalled that there was something special about it. "I wasn't one for hiding my feelings. I mean, if I wanted to drive a bargain, I should have just sat there mum, but I got all excited, and I started jumpin' around, and I said, 'We have to make the deal.'"

Murry Wilson remembered it quite differently: "Nick acted real cool. He said, 'You come back in an hour, and we'll let you know if we want you to become Capitol artists.' He didn't act like he was too excited."

This historical contradiction is the first in a series of disagreements that have occurred in print between Venet and the Wilson family. Audree Wilson thinks "the main problem was that he didn't tell the truth." Carl Wilson was more blunt. He said that Venet was "full of shit" when it came to the Beach Boys.

Above, The Beach Boys at an early Capitol recording session and their first Capitol single. Opposite, Jan and Dean cash in on the new surfing craze.

Venet told writer Tom Nolan that Murry Wilson's visits to his office were to be dreaded. He had the receptionist warn him of Murry's impending arrival, and he would hide under his desk. One day, Murry burst past Venet's secretary, not believing her claim that Venet wasn't in, and spent the entire day using Venet's phone while Venet crouched under his desk. Audree Wilson counters that recollection by noting that Venet "really used to tell some copped-up stories. . . . Murry never used to go see Nick Venet after the first time, never. He had no reason to. . . . [Venet] said, for instance, that he'd see Murry coming and he'd hide under his desk. . . . Venet made Murry out to be some kind of monster. He lied, he really did."

Murry was abrasive in his dealing with Capitol, but he was fighting for his sons. What Venet really objected to were Murry's musical ideas. Venet noted that Murry felt that Brian could be the next Elvis Presley. Venet also recalled that Murry "wanted to elevate the boys by putting them into 'pretty music.'" According to Venet, Murry Wilson's music was from another time, the schmaltz of the early- and mid-twentieth century, and Murry didn't really know "where his sons were at. . . . I think Murry really fucked up the group for a couple of years."

The feud reveals a lot about the worst side of both camps, and their inter-

mittent battles made the early years of the group's Capitol stay very unpleasant. But regardless of the bad feelings between Venet and the Wilsons that immediately developed, Venet did persuade Capitol vice-president Voyle Gilmore to purchase the Beach Boys' demos for three hundred dollars. The signing also included a five percent royalty, and although it wasn't a generous deal, it was fairly typical for the times. For the Beach Boys, it was an exciting opportunity to make more records.

The group's first Capitol release was "Surfin' Safari" on one side and "409" on the other. The co-author of "409" was Gary Usher, the newest member of the Beach Boys family. Usher's uncle, Benny Jones, lived near the Wilsons in Hawthorne. Uncle Benny suggested that Gary go over and meet the Wilsons as Gary also had a record out, and they would have something in common. Finally, one Sunday, as Usher recalls, "I went over and talked to them, they were practicing, you could hear them all over the neighborhood.

"I seemed to hit it off with Brian right away; I seemed to have a soul affinity with him. We could touch each other on

inner levels, even though neither of us knew anything about it at the time or how to do it." This meeting took place in January 1962, and Usher remembers that "the first day I went over there, we wrote together. I played a little rhythm guitar and a little bass, not much, and Brian played interesting piano. He knew all the progressive progressions. He knew all about the Four Freshmen, but he needed someone to help him break it down into contemporary forms and make that vast knowledge apply to rock and roll. In some respects, I was a channel for that. . . . In the beginning

stages, it was vital." Gary Usher's role in Brian's development was important, but as Gary notes, "Sometimes, after your usefulness has been used up, the creative spirit moves along. And that's good. It should happen that way, if it's honest." Brian has stated that it was Gary Usher who "showed me how to write songs; showed me the spirit of competition." The first song they wrote together was "Lonely Sea," which only took about twenty minutes to write, as Gary recalls. Besides working together, Brian and Gary also became very close friends.

One of the early songs they wrote together was "409," a paean to a hot rod that Usher hoped he might some day own. That song was part of the package sold to Capitol, and it was one side of the Beach Boys' first Capitol single "Surfin' Safari" / "409." "Surfin' Safari" was a big, overnight hit in cities like Phoenix, Arizona. "409" was also a hit, giving the group its first two-sided success. Most rock groups had a few hits and disappeared, but it was beginning to look like the Beach Boys might be around for a while.

Between that second hit and the release of their first album, the Beach Boys garnered some valuable recording and performing experiences, which would greatly influence the careers of a Southern California duo who were "between hits."

Dean Torrence, of Jan and Dean, first heard the Beach Boys "on the radio, driving down Pacific Coast Highway." Dean remembers thinking, " 'My God, that sounds like our stuff,' and being flattered that somebody thought it was good enough to copy. . . . I don't remember ever feeling threatened. I was kind of interested."

Jan and Dean finally met the Beach Boys at a concert. In those days they were called hops, and the two groups were doing their first show together. "Since we weren't a self-contained band, [the Beach Boys] were going to back us up. So we met a couple of hours early in a house trailer and practiced . . . they learned our four songs and they had their six or seven."

The scene of the hop was near Hawthorne, the Beach Boys' home turf, and although Jan and Dean were the headliners, Dean recalls that "the audience was very pro–Beach Boy." After all, they were "local town heroes."

Live performances by rock groups were short in those days, and Dean noted that "it went by pretty quickly. After they did their songs, we did our songs. . . .

We didn't talk very much. . . . The total concert was maybe a thirty-minute job." But the audience wanted an encore. The two groups hadn't rehearsed anything else so Jan and Dean decided to perform two Beach Boys songs, "Surfin'" and "Surfin' Safari."

Dean remembers, "They kind of looked at us as if to say, 'You'd do our songs with us *and* let us stand up front?' They thought they had to stand in the back . . . they were really amazed. We had a lot of fun doing it."

Jan and Dean realized that the trend in surfing music was a bandwagon they wanted to jump on, and they decided to record a couple of surf tunes on their next album, which they titled *Jan and Dean Take Linda Surfin'*.

At that time, Brian Wilson was writing the only vocal songs about surfing, so Jan and Dean called the Beach Boys and said, "We had so much fun at that concert, why don't you guys get together and we'll put your two songs on the album . . . and you can come and help us [record it]. . . . They were thrilled. It was the first time their songs had been on an albüm." Jan and Dean were the first to recognize the potential of the surfing trend. When Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys ignited new fads, like hot-rod songs, Jan and Dean were there. Aided by Brian's songwriting, they had a long run on the charts milking the fads that the Beach Boys popularized and quickly deserted. Besides the records, which were Jan Berry's province, Jan and Dean were great performers. As native Californians, their tanned, sun-bleached looks epitomized California to the world. To some, the Beach Boys and Jan and Dean were one and the same. It was all California music, and all full of fun.

The arrival of the Beach Boys presaged a new trend in popular music—the self-contained band: a group that wrote, produced and performed their own material. Nick Venet offers an interesting perspective on what effect they had on the record business. "It was a shot in the arm for the entire industry. . . . It was a new form of . . . teenage music. It had nothing to do with your girlfriend, breaking up or driving off a cliff. It was a pure California phenomenon. The Beach Boys just represented California to the rest of the country . . . some sort of fantasy that was out there that just got triggered by the Beach Boys records." Taking care of the business angle, Nick notes that their sales were overwhelming. Without the sales, the California fantasy would have been stillborn in Brian Wilson's head.

Part of Brian Wilson's struggle as an artist was the resistance that he received from the record industry. Nick Venet was part of that resistance; still, he has come to understand what Brian was trying to do. Venet feels that Brian was five years ahead of the industry and that he has suffered for it. Brian and the Beach Boys were one of the first acts to break out of what Venet termed "the major label syndrome." Up until that time, all groups recorded in the studios provided by the label, used the engineers and producers and musicians that thelabel told them to use. Brian (with help from Murry) forced Capitol to let the group record outside Capitol's studios and to produce themselves, a first for the business. By forcing that policy change, Brian helped free California for young up-and-coming producers and musicians. Venet noted that until then, New York had been the center for recording. Brian used the young unknown musicians, and along with Phil Spector, made people like Glen Campbell and Leon Russell Studio stars long before they were successful on their

own.

Roger Christian, a disc jockey and songwriter who co-authored a number of great tunes with both Brian and Jan Berry, felt that "the Beach Boys were not accorded the respect [by Capitol] because they were kids . . . and half the time, they'd come in, they wouldn't be wearing shoes, because that's the way it was. It was a hard thing to get the older people at Capitol to accept [the fact] that the Beach Boys were keeping them alive at the record company. Everything the Beach Boys did at Capitol, they had to fight for." Christian recalls the battle over where the Beach Boys were going to record and notes that part of the Capitol contract was that you had to record in their studio. Roger thinks that the Beach Boys wanted to get out of Capitol because the studios were too large for the kind of music the group was doing.

Chuck Britz, who engineered almost all the Beach Boys' hits at Western Studios, feels differently. He thinks it was that the group didn't feel comfortable at Capitol, and that Western was isolated from the business and therefore "they felt more free to do what they wanted to do." Britz notes that in any in-house studio, "it's easy for people to walk in and out and destroy the process that gets you going. If you're in a groove, there's nothing worse than somebody coming in and asking a political or a financial question."

Venet admits that the record companies in those days didn't care about the artists. "If you had a hit record and wanted to spend all your money, fine, because the law of averages was that you weren't going to have one tomorrow." The record industry at that time was filled with a lot of "old men" who had no vision, no understanding that the music that was happening was going to revolutionize their business. "The First Tycoon of Teen," Phil Spector (recognized as one of the greatest record producers ever), had already fought his battles and had ultimately established his own company so that he would have artistic freedom. Brian was the first artist to battle the executives successfully.

Brian and Phil were loved for what they were doing. Hal Blaine, considered the leading session drummer in the world, worked with both Spector and Brian Wilson and notes that "we, as the 'older musicians,' appreciated Brian 'cause at the time, I did sessions with guys who were into big band stuff, no pop music. They used to say things like, 'Now, I don't want you to tune up because we gotta play rock and roll.' That's why so many [of those] people are not in the business today; they felt that rock and roll was so *beneath* them. . . . Everyone said, 'That's garbage, that's junk, it's crap. Why should we be subjected to play that kind of fourteen-year-old high school music?' No one knew that music was taking over the world, that it was what the world needed."

The musicians dug Brian, but Capitol Records never really tried to understand him; they never cared about him as a person. Capitol's disregard for Brian as an artist would severely damage Brian and the group's career when they started to grow musically away from the surfer image. As Dean Torrence recalls, "The whole idea with the record companies is to use you up as fast as they can, and once they do, they move on."

The move away from Capitol was an important step in Brian's development as a producer. Roger Christian notes that Nick Venet "had a definite idea of what a record would sound like, and Brian had his idea. Brian could take it from start to finish. He'd create the idea, produce it, and perform on it. Brian can handle it all. He knew what he could get out of his brothers, and how to work with them because they'd been doing it at home for years, and they didn't really feel they needed Nick. . . . So those early records Brian produced, and Nick executive-produced."

Murry recalled that Brian came home one day and was almost crying and asked his dad for help: "Will you go down and tell Capitol we don't want [Venet] anymore, he's changing our sound." Murry then told Capitol's Voyle Gilmore, "You folks don't know how to produce a rock and roll hit in your studios downstairs . . . Leave us alone," Murry

COURTESY OF HAL BLAINE

Murry Wilson The 6th Beach Boy

Above top, Hal Blaine. It has been claimed that Venet signed the Beach Boys to get '409.' Venet counters that by asking, "If it was '409' I was interested in, why did I have the group take pictures at the ocean with a surfboard?"

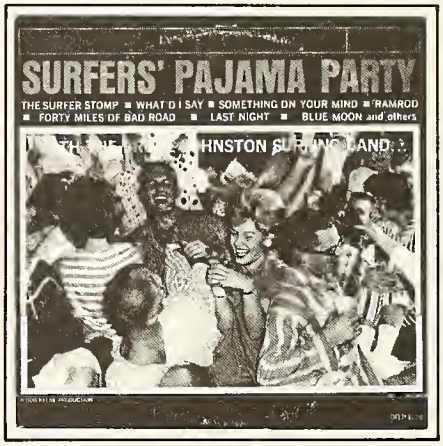
demanded, "and we'll make hits for you." Murry and the group won two major battles. They were given the right to record outside of Capitol, and they quickly pushed Nick Venet totally out of the picture.

The first two Beach Boys albums bear the credit, "Produced by Nick Venet." Audree Wilson remembers that "Venet had his name on as producer, which was totally inaccurate. He had nothing to do with producing." Venet explains what he did as the Beach Boys' producer. "I would help Brian choose which songs to record from the dozens he had written. Also, I was an objective viewpoint. I would say to Brian, 'I don't think you need to do the record over.' The difficulty was, everybody was trying to write and arrange with him. As a producer, my job was to let him arrange and write, keep his theories alive. His ideas were always better than anyone's."

What ever Venet's contribution, there can be no doubt that Brian was responsible for the development of the Beach Boys sound. Nobody, except Murry Wilson, would dispute that: "See, the whole world trade has given Brian credit for everything. Truthfully—I'm not beating myself on the back, but knowing them as their father, I knew their voices, right? And I'm musical, my wife is, we knew how to sing on key and when they were flat and sharp, and how they sould sound good in a song." Murry's claim that he put on the echo and surged on the power "to make them sound like gods" isn't exactly accurate.

As engineer Chuck Britz remembers it, "That was his favorite line. Surge. He always said that. Surge here, surge there. I wouldn't do it because you can only surge so much." What Britz would do was to raise the volume of the control room monitor so that Murry would think that Britz was doing what Murry told him to do. On the actual recording, though, Britz wouldn't "surge." Britz notes that "basically, his ideas were right, like the dynamic power he wanted in a record, but you can only do so much. He was great; I really liked Murry." When it came to musical decisions, Britz recalls, it was almost always Brian. "Brian is the Beach Boys as far as I'm concerned. Brian was the only guy who could put all the parts together. The other guys helped a little, you'd see names, co-writer [etc.] . . . but you're talking about a guy getting credit that maybe just came up with a couple of changes, linewise. The basic principle and the basic song were his. . . . [A co-writer's credit] doesn't mean you actually have much to do with the song. There's a lot of people who give credit to other people. I still think the heaviest burden of it all was on Brian's shoulders, and he knew it."

Britz engineered every Beach Boys hit from "Surfer Girl" to "Good Vibrations," but wasn't involved in the recording of the Beach Boys' first flop single, a rather lame "Ten Little Indians," the children's chant given the Beach Boys vocal treatment. Even



though it wasn't a hit, the Beach Boys had a strong enough following by the fall of '62 that the record made it into the top 50 in the Billboard charts, peaking at number 49. But it only remained in the charts eight weeks, as compared to seventeen weeks for "Surfin' Safari."

The Beach Boys' success as recording artists, momentarily slowed by the relative failure of "Ten Little Indians," picked up with the release of their first album, *Surfin' Safari.* Its success firmly established the Beach Boys as the nation's number-one surfing group, and, combined with the hit singles, made them a lot of money.

For Brian, that "overnight success, overnight wealth . . . hit me the hardest." Brian welcomed his new lifestyle, "just think, I don't have to get up and go to work and make my money. The money's rolling in from sales of records; I was just really set. It gave me a lot of confidence." But sudden fame "was frightening to me . . . there were a lot of challenges to overcome . . . I just felt it was a challenge at first, to handle it, to handle the success that had come."

The chief focus for Brian in those days was making hit records; as Brian once noted, "I don't need money, I could care less about money as far as having to spend it. I really could care less about how rich I get." As Audree Wilson recalls, "Brian was interested in the music. If it was a hit, great, but he did not think about money."

Mike Love, who will emerge as a "villain" in the fight between Brian's art and commercial demands, recalled that it was "just unbelievable, the swift rise to a relatively secure position in music. People ask, 'Wasn't it a struggle? How long did it take before you were recognized?' And I say, 'About two weeks.'" That hyperbolic and inaccurate boast aside, Mike continued, "The first song we did became a hit. The second song we did was a bigger hit."

While the Beach Boys' recording career was beginning to earn them considerable money, the Beach Boys as a live act was not a particularly impressive money-making machine in 1962.

By Murry's own admission, he held them back from major concerts because he didn't think they were ready for the "big time." He booked them at record store openings and local dances. Audree remembers that they used to drive to San Bernadino and other cities to play free shows. "It was a smart move, actually," Audree feels. "The D.J.s were all putting on their own dances at that time. They'd call, and we'd go." What no one will admit "on-the-record" is that although the guys were never paid for what Murry called the "forty freebies," the Beach Boys did receive compensation in the form of valuable airplay. Because payola or plugola is illegal, nobody will acknowledge being involved, although it appears to have been a standard practice in the small towns for D.J.s to play the records of the groups who played "for free" at their dances. On the surface, it's not a very sinister practice, and it was a very good way for

JAKI ROTHERY

a group to build a following. Today, payola has been refined and is practiced as a very subtle and sophisticated art. Rock writers and D.J.s receive free records and concert tickets and press junkets (and drugs?), and there is the implied promise of advertising for your magazine or radio station if you give exposure to one of the company's artists.

Opposite top, While this album includes two songs by the Beach Boys, it's not THE Beach Boys. Opposite bottom, An early effort by future Beach Boy Bruce Johnston. Above, A British fan's idealized portrait of the 1962 Beach Boys.

Airplay is strictly controlled today, and it is hard to purchase it overtly.

Besides the free shows, the steadily improving Beach Boys did play many gigs for pay, both as a featured attraction and as a back-up band. Roger Christian remembers that he "used to do record hops, and the Beach Boys or the Surfaris were my back-up group. I used to pay them about a hundred dollars a night, twenty dollars a man." Bob Eubanks, best known for hosting TV's "The Newlywed Game," was a Los Angeles D.J. in 1962. He recalls, "When I was a D.J. at KRLA, I would hire the Beach Boys. I would pay them a hundred and fifty dollars to come out on Friday night and play Rainbow Gardens." Bob "had a good relationship with the guys, they were very nice. . . . It was obvious that the father was the true boss of what was going on. . . . I always thought Murry was a bit of a bullshitter, but he was in there plugging for his boys. For that, I admired him." Eubanks also tried "to get them to change their name because I felt that their name was so regional that they wouldn't have much success out of a coastal area."

Their records were *already* making the Beach Boys a well-known inland group, but as performers, they hadn't strayed too far from L.A. The Beach Boys were still basically a regional act as 1962 came to a close. Nineteen sixty-three would be the year they'd become national stars.

The third year of the Beach Boys' existence, 1963, was the year they made their first mark on the burgeoning youth culture. In fact, the Beach Boys' impact was an important step toward creating a "sixties youth" that was different from the "Happy Days" of the fifties. The Beach Boys were singing about surfing and hot-rodding and surfer girls, but the song content was really more a metaphor for a sense of freedom. The group's music didn't have anything to do with adults, and that message came through quite clearly.

For teenagers in 1963, the Beach Boys were one of the first groups that were singing directly to them. The Beach Boys weren't singing about dissent and drugs—that wasn't what was happening at that time. The music functioned as a bridge between generations. It was the Beach Boys who blasted the Frankie Avalons into oblivion. After all, who needed those noxious teen idols (they could only carry a tune) when there was a group of good-looking guys who not only could really sing, but were writing their own songs and playing their own instruments.

Only a few of the group's fans rushed out and bought surfboards. Many of them, however, did buy the image of the ocean, the sun, and all the guys and girls who "were either out surfin' or they've got a party going." That's from "Surf City," an irresistible idyllic fantasy that appealed to millions. Actually, it was only part of a two-pronged musical attack masterminded by Brian Wilson that first cemented the allure of California firmly in the hearts of America's youth.

First, there was the Beach Boys' own "Surfin' U.S.A." Brian took an old Chuck Berry hit, "Sweet Little Sixteen," and transformed it into a surf anthem. *Surfin' Safari,* the Beach Boys' first album, had extolled the virtues of the surf life, but hadn't quite made it on sociological (let alone musical) terms. This time out, Brian struck a truly responsive chord. His universal surfer hit home in even the most landlocked locales, and "Surfin' U.S.A." reached number 3. Brian had conquered the airwaves; next he would control the fantasies.

With superlative ease, Brian conceived "Surf City," a place where there were "two girls for every boy." In those blissfully chauvinistic days, what red-blooded male could wilfully resist this picture of two tall, blond Amazonian girls hanging on his arms while he braved the waves. Curiously, it wasn't the Beach Boys who got to sing about "Surf City." Friends and cohorts Jan and Dean had the number-one smash with the song, a sore point between Brian and the family, especially when they realized that Brian was singing on the record. It really didn't matter to the kids who was singing. The one-two punch of "Surfin' U.S.A." and "Surf City" brought the "California Sound" and lifestyle attention on a national level.

With this magnificent myth in their back pockets, the Beach Boys finally broke out of the Southern California club scene and began playing dates all over the country, and, almost as important, began to make considerable money. The group's success on the road, however, wasn't the result of careful planning between Capitol Records and the William Morris Agency. Those companies often signed talent without knowing what to do with it. That was the case with the Beach Boys. Their touring success was due to the foresight of a nineteen-year-old promoter named Fred Vail, who lived in the decidedly non-surfing city of Sacramento, California.

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Opposite, a Beach Boys fan. Above, An early Fred Vail production.

4.
IF EVERYBODY HAD AN OCEAN

El Camino High School in Sacramento had a problem. They had to raise money for the senior grad night party. Car washes and candy sales were all right as fundraisers, but not good enough to make the kind of money that was needed. So the high school kids went to one of their near peers, Fred Vail, who had just graduated the year before, but who was known around town as a go-getter. From his early teen years on, Fred had worked at local radio stations and had been involved in concert promotion.

Fred knew that the Beach Boys' records were popular in Sacramento and thought they would be a good group for a concert. Doing a little investigative work, he found out that the boys were stuck in a rut in L.A., playing the local clubs for just a few hundred a night. Bob Eubanks remembers booking them into his chain of Cinnamon Cinder clubs in early 'sixty-three. "We always did capacities when they played." Capacity, however, meant only four hundred people.

So the group was readily available for local shows, but they still hadn't headlined any real concerts.

Vail found out from Capitol Records that the Beach Boys were represented by the William Morris Agency. When he called the Morris Agency, Fred found out that "they weren't aware of the Beach Boys, didn't even know that one of their agents had signed the Beach Boys, didn't know who the Beach Boys were."

The young agent who had signed the group was Marshall Berle (nephew of Miltie) who remembers that he first approached the Beach Boys when he saw them as one of the supporting acts at a Dick and Dee Dee show. Fred Vail picks up the story again: "Marshall had signed the Boys [they are always "the Boys" to Fred] and we got together for negotiations. We agreed on five hundred dollars for one night's performance. So he went to Murry and Audree and presented the offer and it was acceptable to them. Then, they realized that that kind of money wouldn't really take care of travel, so they came back to me and said, 'Okay, we'll do it for five hundred dollars plus six round-trip air fares, or we'll do it for seven hundred and fifty dollars guaranteed.'" Unfortunately for the Beach Boys, Fred Vail's arithmetic was better than the Wilsons', so they ended up with the seven-fifty. Round trip air fare at that time was about sixty dollars per person. Although this wasn't multi-million-dollar mismanagement, it was indicative of the Wilson parents' being in over their heads. Their hearts were in the right place; their financial skills weren't.

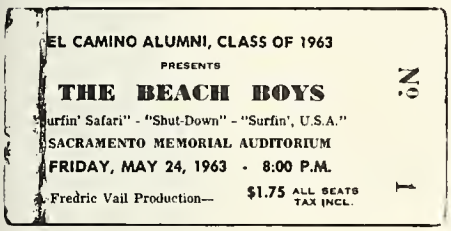
The deal was made, and Fred notes that "on the day before the show we made the deposit. You used to have to send 50 percent, and they'd send you a copy of the contract. . . . Audree had signed the contract, and it was for Carl Wilson and four musicians." It is interesting that as early as 1963, a not-yet-seventeen-year-old Carl Wilson was the acknowledged onstage leader of the group.

Concert promoter Vail went to work, printing posters

and tickets. The show was set for the Sacramento Auditorium, a hall that to that point had been used primarily for concert stars like Johnny Mathis and orchestras and traveling ballets. Outside of those played by Dick Clark's traveling troupes, there weren't many rock concerts per se in 1963.

The tickets, which were only one dollar and seventy-five cents, were selling at a brisk pace. Vail used his radio contacts "to convince them that since we were doing it to raise money for El Camino High School's graduating class, they should give us public-service announcements." With that clever claim, Vail got free radio advertising.

The afternoon of the concert, Vail got in his old station wagon and went to the airport to meet the Beach Boys. When the plane arrived, Murry and the Beach Boys got off. Significantly, that lineup included Al, Mike, Carl, Dennis, and



David Marks. Brian, never a happy traveler, had stayed home.

Vail continued, "Now, you gotta remember that we're all kids. . . . We're loading the equipment into the wagon and Carl says, 'Who's the promoter?' I said, 'I am,' and Carl says, 'You can't be, you're just a kid.' So I said, 'Well, you guys are young. I've been around.' And Carl said, 'Fine. Well, who's on the show tonight? Who's the opening act?' I said, 'Well, you guys.' And he said, 'Well, who else? Who's carrying the show?' And I said, 'You guys are the headliners.'"

Fred remembers that the boys all shared looks of astonishment "and said, 'We're not headliners.' And I'll never forget, Carl then said, 'You're going to take a beating tonight, aren't you?' And I said, 'No, I don't think so.'" Advance sales were over a thousand, so all the expenses had been covered; but it remained to be seen how many people would show up the night of the show. Fred was confident and reassured the guys, "'Just worry about the show, and let's get down to the auditorium and set up.' So we went to the auditorium, and we all got along great because we were all kids. It was my first big auditorium presentation, and it was their first shot as a featured act at an out-of-town show. We weren't a beach city, we were inland, and they didn't even know their popularity stretched that far."

As Vail recalls, "I was the kid with the radio voice; I emceed it. I went out there and introduced the boys as 'America's number-one surfing band.' They came out and did a forty-minute set, and the kids went crazy. Then there was a ten-minute intermission and then another forty-minute show. The Boys didn't know that much material, so primarily they just repeated what had gone over well for the first set, and did a couple of other things . . . a lot of Chuck Berry, Dion. Al sang 'Runaway.'

"We had a super gate that night; we ended up with about three thousand kids, which was a tremendous crowd for just the Beach Boys back then." Indeed, the Beach Boys were used to playing small clubs for a few hundred people. A crowd of three thousand was an incredible rush, and it was an extra big surprise to them because they had expected to be only a supporting act.

Still unaware of how big an attraction they were rapidly becoming, the Beach Boys and Fred Vail went back to the hotel. The block-and-a-half walk took forty-five minutes because "the kids were trailing us . . . girls, guys asking for autographs, talking to us." When they got to the hotel, they sat at a long table to go over the financial results of the night. "Murry was counting the money," Vail remembers, "and they were all excited about it because it was their first time out of Southern California. Murry says, 'Hey, fellows, guess what? I just figured out how much we made tonight, and after the Morris commission and our expenses and stuff, we made fifty-two dollars apiece.' And the guys are all exclaiming 'Great! Super!' They'd spent it all already. And they said, 'Fred, how'd you do tonight, how'd you come out?' And I said, 'Oh, we made about four thousand dollars.' There was silence at the table, you probably could have heard a pin drop. They had to pick themselves off the floor . . . They were all astounded, and I said, 'Well, don't you guys make money like this normally?' I was really naive. I said, 'Hey, you guys did all the work, I just put the show together. The Morris office is really underselling you if you're only getting three hundred dollars a night. They're cleaning house on you guys.'"

Fred then made what he called a "naive, stupid blunder," but it has to rank as one of those show biz legends that can't possibly be true. It was like Mickey Rooney's saying, "I've got a great idea; why don't we put on the show ourselves!" Fred said, "'Why don't you guys just do your own shows?' not thinking about the ramifications of that statement. So Murry said, 'What do you mean?' And I said, 'You're popular in other cities besides Sacramento. Why don't you go into cities where you're popular, rent a hall, buy radio time, print tickets and do your own show?' And Murry said, 'Well, I can't because I have Able machinery company. I'm just doing this part-time, and the boys aren't generating that much money where I can give up my livelihood and support my family off this.' And I said, 'Well, I'll tell you what. I'd love to set up shows for you. We could work out something where I'd get paid out of the receipts or something.' And that was the beginning of what became American Productions, just one of those off-the-wall things whereby I made a naive statement that I thought was a natural idea." That "naive statement and natural idea" that was the birth of the Beach Boys' own company resulted in the growth of the activity that would provide the Beach Boys with a major portion of their income for years to come. Eventually the group's tours of the United States and the rest of the world would help make them one of the premiere live "acts" in musical history. The tours would also be the only source of income after the hits stopped in 1968.

Opposite, Brian at home. Above, Ticket #1 for Fred Vail's first Beach Boys concert. Left, The fans at the Sacramento concerts were among the first to consistently scream for the Beach Boys.

The growth of the Beach Boys as a concert attraction wasn't just important monetarily. The live shows were crucial in building the group's soon-to-be massive following. When a young fan buys records, it's for one set of reasons. Put that same fan in a concert hall with the group that made those hit records, and you've created a fanatic, a loyal follower who will buy your every record, come to see your concerts and join your fan club. Fred Vail may have stumbled onto the Beach Boys accidentally, but his contribution, which has usually been overlooked, was definitely an important part of the Beach Boys' success story.

One other interesting aspect of the Fred Vail/Murry Wilson discussion was Murry's contention that the Beach Boys weren't generating enough income to merit his full-time attention. Murry's failure to see the group's potential is odd. He pushed his sons so they could be the best, yet he didn't feel they could make enough money to warrant his total attention. Nick Venet, the Wilsons' nemesis, claims that Murry thought so little of the group's future that Murry took Beach Boys income, and instead of buying much-needed new sound equipment and instruments, Murry leased a crane for his heavy machinery business. That doesn't sound like a man who was devoted to developing his sons' careers at any cost.

COURTESY OF MICHAEL LOHS

With their careers as live performers on the upswing, thanks to Fred Vail, the Beach Boys' recorded efforts were also showing significant improvement. Brian told the group's first interviewer, Earl Leaf (no relation), that on "Surfin' U.S.A." "we developed a stylish sound, the high sound became our sound. It was the first time we had ever sung our voices twice on one record. It strengthens the sound. Sing it once, then sing it

again over that, so both sounds are perfectly synchronized. This makes it much brighter and gives it a rather shrill and magical sound without using echo chambers. It makes it sound spectacular, so much power.'' To the listener, the type of vocal that Brian described was an important part of the appeal of their records and was an early use of vocal double-tracking in rock 'n' roll.

The sound was improving and so were the sales. Not only was "Surfin' U.S.A." a top-ten hit, but the flip side, "Shut Down," was the group's first big car hit. Just as they launched the surfing fad in '62, the Beach Boys in 1963 reflected the teenage interest in cars. Although the Beach Boys have been typecast as musical faddists who cashed in on the latest teen crazes, it is important to realize that the Beach Boys, musically and lyrically, didn't stay in one area long enough to go stale or allow the public to get bored. Brian Wilson said, "When a new fad comes along, we'll be the first to ride it." Brian, however, was quite aware of the fleeting quality of fads. He told Earl Leaf in 1964, "We can't become too dedicated to fads because our name could be too closely associated to them. Starting a fad is easier than ending it gracefully, like a love affair, and it's too dangerous to base a format on a temporary fad." Significantly, "Surfer Girl," released in the summer of '63, would be their last *surfing* hit. Within two years, the Beach Boys had started two major trends. Rather than continuing to exploit these fads, Brian Wilson left the spoils for groups like Jan and Dean. The Beach Boys' music remained in the teen genre only for the next two years. By the summer of '64, Brian was already examining broader themes. To Brian's and the group's detriment, the image of the Beach Boys never caught up with Brian.

Back in '63, though, Brian and the Beach Boys were the kings of surf, thanks to their hit with "Surfin' U.S.A." Brian explained the story behind that song. "I was going with a girl named Judy Bowles at the time. And her brother Jimmy was a surfer, and he knew all the spots. . . . I started humming the melody to the song 'Sweet Little Sixteen.' And what happened was I got fascinated with the fact of doing it. And I thought to myself, 'God, what about trying to put surf lyrics to the "Sweet Little Sixteen" melody!' . . . The concept was about 'they're doing this in this city, they're doing that in that city,' the Chubby Checker concept. So I thought of calling it 'Surfin' U.S.A.' (much like Checker's 'Twistin' U.S.A.'). I talked to Jimmy. I said, 'Jimmy, I want to do a song mentioning all the surf spots.' So he made a list and, by God, he didn't leave one out."

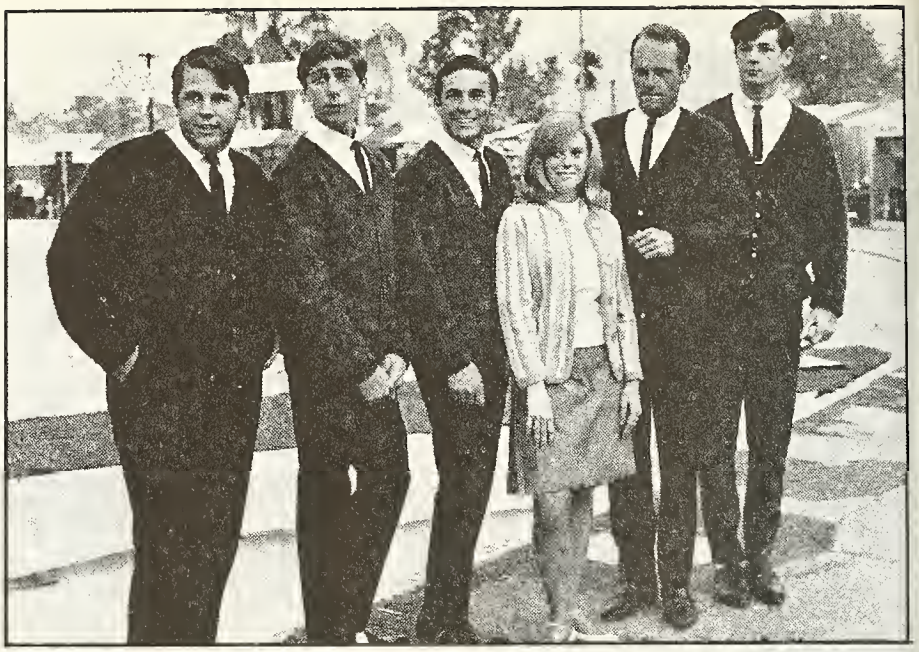
What the Beach Boys did leave out was a label credit for Chuck Berry. The early pressings of the record credited the song solely to Brian Wilson. There was no mention of Berry's having written the melody, or of the Beach Boys' receiving permission to change Berry's original lyrics. That omission resulted in all future records crediting Chuck Berry as the author of "Surfin' U.S.A."; Brian's

Opposite top, Mike, Brian, and Carl admire a wall full of hits. Opposite bottom, an Early publicity photo with a "'vette." Below, Dennis and Murry in the kitchen at home. Below bottom, Brian, Mike and Dennis vocalize before a concert.

lyrical contribution was ignored for years. In 1977, Leif Garrett had a big hit with a remake of "Surfin' U.S.A.," and on his album, he credited the song to Brian and Chuck Berry. It's noteworthy that with all the great compositions Brian was to write, the tune that established the Beach Boys as big recording artists was not an original melody. But Brian immediately made up for that with one of his own tunes, his first hit outside the Beach Boys.

"One day," Dean Torrence remembers, "Brian sat down at the piano and said, 'Do you want to hear our new single?' . . . and he does 'Surfin' U.S.A. We [Jan and Dean] said, 'Hey, why don't you give that to us? We can make that a bigger hit than you.' Brian said, 'Nah, we're really looking forward to doing it . . . well, I've got more, what about this?' . . . and he played 'Surf City,' which hadn't been completed but Brian had worked out the opening, a verse, and the chorus." Jan Berry finished the song with Brian, and Jan and Dean had a number-one hit, the first number-one song to emerge from the new "California Sound."

Besides co-writing "Surf City," Brian



also sang on the record. Reportedly, Murry was heartbroken and furious at Brian's participation on a record by another surf group. Murry called Jan Berry a pirate for taking the song away from the Beach Boys. One day, knowing that the Beach Boys' family was at Western Studios, Jan arrived on the scene in full pirate's costume, complete with a patch over one eye. Most everybody thought it was funny.

Murry wasn't the only person upset over Brian's participation on "Surf City." The record caused quite a stir at Capitol Records when the field promotion men called Hollywood to find out why the new Beach Boys record had been released without their knowledge. Brian was contracted to Capitol, so his presence on the Jan and Dean record wasn't legal. Not much ever happened even though the cross-pollination between Jan and Dean and the Beach Boys continued for a number of years. Dean smugly recalls, "They were always threatening to sue and hold up royalties, but they could never figure out whose voice was whose because everybody sounded so much alike, especially on the background vocals."

There never were any lawsuits over Brian's "extracurricular" singing, but the Beach Boys were continually having problems with Capitol. When the Beach Boys had their first big two-sided hit, "Surfin' U.S.A."/"Shut Down," the group released an album named only after the surf hit. Capitol and Nick Venet exploited the Beach Boys by releasing an album called *Shut Down* which included only two Beach Boys songs, both already released; the rest of the album was hot-rod music that the Beach Boys had nothing to do with. Capitol was trading on the Beach Boys' success without even mentioning their plans to the group. The Beach Boys did learn their lesson, and when "Surfer Girl" and "Little Deuce Coupe" were both hits, the Beach Boys made sure that *they* had the albums named after the hits. Although the three 1963 Beach Boys albums contained some of the same songs, it didn't seem to matter to the fans who bought them all, particularly *Little Deuce Coupe.* That album, filled with car tunes, was the Beach Boys' first theme LP.

The sun, the surf, and the cars were the images most closely associated with the Beach Boys' big sellers, but the band wasn't a fad. Kids learn to separate the novelty groups from those they want to keep around for a while. Brian Wilson's music had gotten very good, very quickly. For instance, there was "Surfer Girl," a song with one of the prettiest introductions Brian's ever done. It was also one of the first songs that Brian ever wrote, and it has remained special to the fans and to Brian for an important reason. The song was written about Judy Bowles, and as Gary Usher recalls, "Brian's girlfriend when I met him was Judy. Bonnie, my first wife, and I used to double-date with Brian and Judy and go out and drink beer, make love. They went through some incredible trips, those two. Brian was sensitive at that age, and she left her fingerprints on him for life. I think she was the one who

broke off the relationship." Gary notes that they were close to getting formally engaged, but then the affair ended. "The going together and the breaking up and the ons and offs and the pressures and the problems and the hurtings were all a trauma for Brian. Sometimes he couldn't write for weeks at a time. This was in nineteen sixty-two and 'sixty-three. Aside from the times with Judy, his highs were high and his lows were low, like most creative people. In that respect, Brian was quite a ways out on a limb, even in those days." As Usher recalls, "Judy was the first girl he really fell in love with and she definitely left her mark on him."

Usher also remembers the more personal times he spent with Brian, when they "would talk about deep, philosophical subjects as well as we were capable of at the time. Brian and I were close, though. We shared a lot of viewpoints." Often the two friends had great fun because, as Usher recalls, "Brian had a great sense of humor. We would sit and laugh like a bunch of goons. It was a good release for him. We used to sit and laugh and go crazy. We liked to tease Murry, and this would of course infuriate Murry. I would say to Brian, 'Look what he did, I can't believe he did that; we should get even with him for that.' That's one of the ways I was a bad influence. Brian couldn't do too much, because he has to live with the guy, he's a son, but I didn't have that over my head. I would always be loose with him because I wasn't his son, and that looseness influenced the guys."

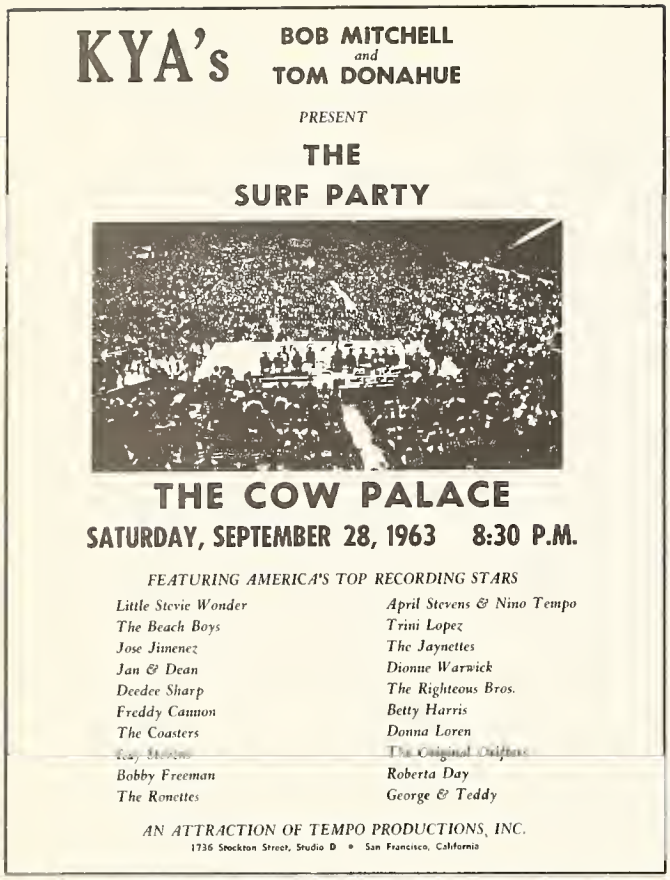
One time they decided to play a trick on Murry. "There was this myna bird whistle that reminded us of Murry. So one night, at about three in the morning, we snuck up to his window. He always slept right by the window, wanted to keep an eye on the neighborhood. So we took the tape of this bird call and hooked it up under his window, got inside Brian's car and turned it on. A couple minutes later, we heard, 'I know you're out there! I know it's you, you better step forward now. Brian, is that you? I know it's Usher!' Of course, it's a tape recording so he can't find anybody, and we're out in the car. I couldn't hold it in any longer, and I let out a shriek, and then Brian let out a shriek. And here's this car with no visible occupants, but all this incredible laughter, coming out of the car because the windows were down. He could tell our laughter and that did it. I was always on his blacklist from that day."

"Surfer Girl" was the Beach Boys' first ballad hit, reaching number 7 in the summer of '63, and it established the group's versatility. Whether it was an up-tempo or a slow number, the harmonies were special. According to Brian, "I incorporated some Freshmen harmony in 'Surfer Girl'; we retained a certain amount of the influence of the Freshmen in our group sound."

The harmonic appeal as well as the quality of innocence in songs like

Opposite top, Beach Boys fan club president Jodi Gable with the group. Opposite middle, Brian and Mike. Opposite bottom, The Honeys were (left to right) Marilyn and Diane Rovell, and Ginger Blake. Nick Venet feels that the first Honeys record "was the beginning of Brian's emergence as an independent producer. . . ." Below, The Beach Boys at the Hollywood Bowl, YMCA Day, November 1, 1963. By then, Al Jardine had replaced David Marks.

COURTESY OF MICHAEL OCHS



"Surfer Girl" make the music as current in 1978 as it was in 1963. That kind of longevity is rare in pop music and it's not an achievement to be ignored in an age of disposable everything, including music.

Brian was creating beautiful and timeless music by 1963, but there were already musical indications that everything was not right in his world. Each album included at least one melancholy tune like "The Lonely Sea" or "In My Room." Gary Usher remembers the latter as one of the last songs he wrote with Brian, and that to him and Brian "your room is just like your world, and Brian and I had just gone through that, having your world be your room. We were just trying to write anything that would relate to kids. It was probably the most sensitive song up to that time."

Usher remembers that it was written in the Wilsons' old rehearsal room, and that "Brian was playing the organ and I was playing the bass. We would just sit and ideas would fly out fast and furious. We edited each other." The writings were in the vein of trying to relate "to kids like us, or kids younger." Brian remembers that "I had a room and I thought of it as my kingdom. And I wrote that song, very definitely, that you're not afraid when you're in your room . . . It's absolutely true." What is eerie is that Brian musically predicted the place he would pick to retreat to when the world became more than he could bear. During his so-called "reclusive period," the answer to the question "Where's Brian?" was often answered, "He's in his room."

Besides the already increasing demands on his creativity, Brian was also expected to perform at all the group's personal appearances. As Fred Vail recalled, "Brian never really got off on performing and as early as May 1963 he was missing concerts." As demanding as they were on his time, Brian did get a certain amount of pleasure from the live singing. He once remarked, "It was the most amazing thing I could think of." In 1964, Brian told Earl Leaf that "we've been hearing screams [from the audience] for three years straight and we've grown dependent on that sound. So much fun. Believe me, nothing better for the ego—maybe it's too good for the ego." As Roger Christian notes, "Brian did and didn't like to play live, it's hard to explain." What he didn't like was the time away from his work, the stage

Opposite top, The Beach Boys recorded this concert for the first of their three live albums. Opposite bottom, Brian plays Santa Claus for the rest of the group. Above, the Beach Boys concert on the day President Kennedy was assassinated. Fred Vail: "I called up the radio stations, the ticket agency . . . the phones had been ringing off their hooks, people pleading that the Beach Boys go on. So it dawned on me, 'What else is there to do? The President's dead, and we don't want to think about that, and we're not being sacriligious by going to the show.' The show broke the hall record for attendance. There were absolutely no bad feelings. I went out before the show and asked for a moment of silence to remember the President, and then we went on with the show. . . . We did three encores."

David Marks' departure, according to Fred Vail, was triggered by a childish bluff that backfired. A number of people, though, feel that Murry instigated it. Nick Venet thinks Murry wanted "one less person on royalty. He realized that the least contribution was being made by David Marks."

fright, and the increasing sound volume that was beginning to bother his one good ear. Those reasons never changed, and it is curious that Brian returned to touring in the latter half of the 1970s.

In addition to his dislike of live performing, Brian was also having difficulties in other areas. He was having trouble dealing with the group's rapid rise and the increased pressures that success brought. Brian was not a stay-at-home as a teenager; he was an athlete, an active person. Less than two years into the Beach Boys' existence, Brian was already partially in retreat, although in 1963, the highs and lows were relatively balanced and Brian was a "happy" person.

As a hitmaker, Brian was having no problems at all. He was incredibly prolific; the melodies seemed to spill from his head onto the records, and resulted in an incredible string of seven straight top-ten singles. As Chuck Britz remembers, Brian was so fruitful that "he could write a song on the spot that would be a hit" and he might not use it because "he'd come up with something better and he'd use it" instead.

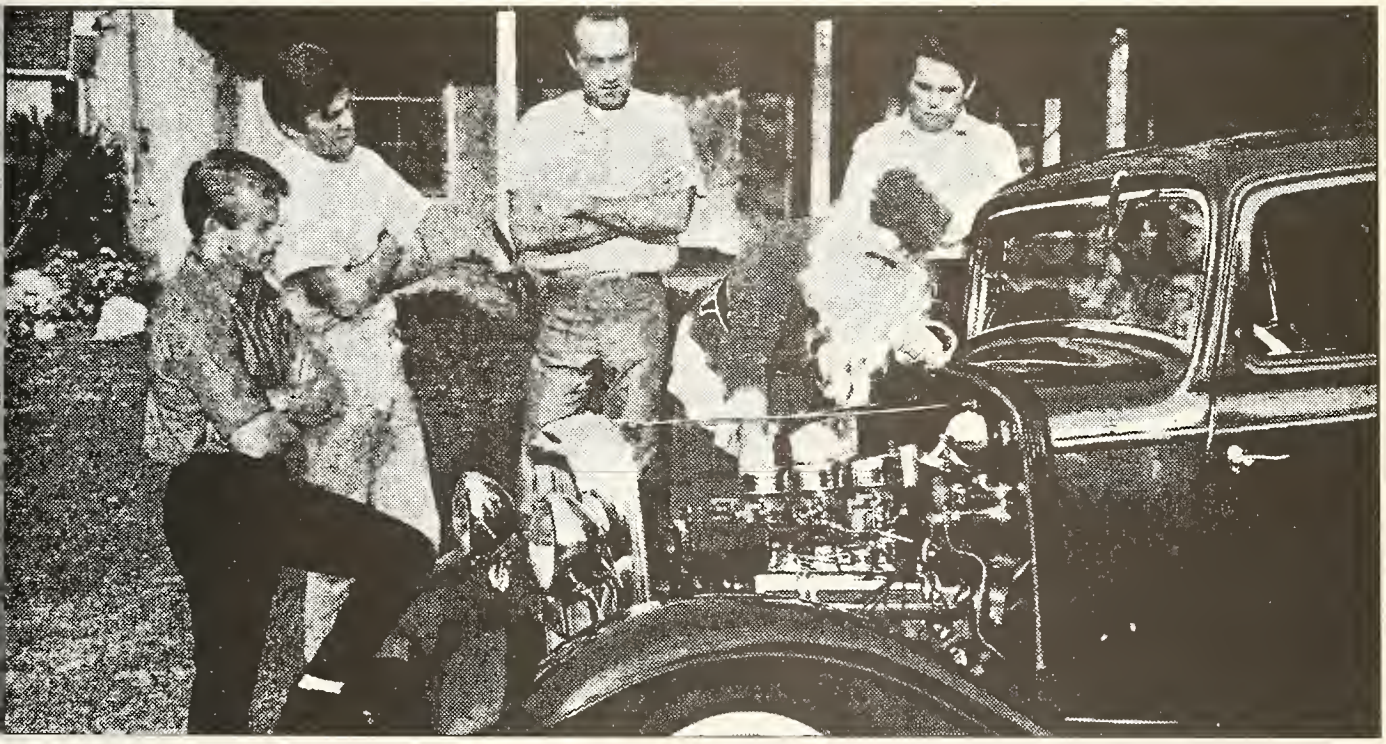
The music world loved Brian's work, yet Murry could still find fault with Brian's ideas. Audree Wilson insists that Brian and Murry "didn't fight a lot about the music," but she relates one disturbing incident that may exemplify the kind of arguments that occurred between father and son. "When Brian

wrote 'Surfin' U.S.A.,'" Audree recalls, "I was down in the music room with him and Murry was up in the bedroom watching TV. Murry came rushing down, and he criticized his [Brian's] rhythm. Brian was furious, just furious. He said, 'Fuck you!' It was just horrible. And I said, 'Brian!' And Carl was sitting down there, too, and he said, 'Brian!' Murry never got over that . . . he used to bring that up to me. I was supposed to go over there and hit Brian with a board, or clobber him or some horrible thing because he said that. I didn't approve of it [the profanity], but I didn't think it called for that."

There were two other noteworthy events that took place in 1963. Brian broke up with Judy Bowles, and Gary Usher helped his lovelorn pal by introducing him to Marilyn Rovell, a cousin of a girl he was dating, Ginger Blake (whose real name is Sandra Glantz). Marilyn eventually became Mrs. Brian Wilson.

The other big happening was the return of Al Jardine to full-time status as a Beach Boy. With Al back in "the family," the Beach Boys' lineup appeared to be set; However, 1964 would be the last year Brian Wilson would be a full-time Beach Boy.

It was also the year that the decade called "The Sixties" finally began in California. The years from 1960 to 1963 had been an extension of the fifties' easygoing complacency. The assassination of President John Kennedy may have ended the fifties for California. If it hadn't, the Vietnam War certainly would have. Still, as 1963 ended, California was mostly preoccupied with itself. It took the arrival of the Beatles to shake that sunny state out of its blissful provincialism.



COURTESY OF ROGER CHRISTIAN

For the Beach Boys, 1963's "Teen Titans" of pop music, 1964's British invasion was as welcome as the War of 1812. The Boys didn't have much choice, however, and they watched morosely as the Beatles took control of the charts. The Beatles were all that mattered in the world of popular music in 1964. They would often have more than one song in the top 10, and it was virtually impossible to turn on the radio or the TV or read the newspaper or a magazine without the Beatles' jumping out and hitting you over the head.

While many American groups fell by the wayside, the Beach Boys rose to the challenge of fresh competition and continued their string of hits that was only rivaled by the Beatles' own success. Brian's self-proclaimed war on the Beatles was just one of the competitive struggles that he placed himself in. His other major foe was Phil Spector. As a producer, Spector was an early idol, occasionally a co-worker, and the ultimate influence for Brian in production technique. In 1964, Brian's battle for production superiority only stimulated his creative juices. The Beatles' fame was unbeatable so Brian fought the group on record. He couldn't match their sociological significance, but he could and did make records that were better produced, incorporated more sophisticated harmonics, and in their own way, were the first real concept albums. *Shut Down, Vol. 2* and *All Summer Long* stand today as the peak of Brian's simpler period, when he had begun to master the studio. His compositions were tight, and the spare, teenage lyrics were a perfect reflection of what a Beach Boy was supposed to do and be. Brian's harmonies and arrangements, on songs like "Hushabye" and "Girls on the Beach," were incredibly full and lush. It would be unfair to compare the Beatles' early productions to Brian's 1964 work.

The arrival of the English bands also began to change the Beach Boys' listening audience. In '62 and '63, the group's fans included more guys than girls. The "tough" British groups like the Rolling Stones and the Animals attracted many of the Beach Boys' male fans. They had originally liked the group's masculine surfer image, but they left the Beach Boys for the new, "cooler" groups. The girl fans, though, stuck by the group. This imbalance in fan appeal would eventually contribute to the group's downfall. The girls would be stolen away by groups like Herman's Hermits and the Monkees, and the more socially aware, older fans would ultimately be turned off by the group's non-political stance. All that was in the future, but these first stirrings of healthy competition may have been one of the factors contributing to Brian's imminent nervous breakdown.

There were certainly enough hints in some of the more melancholy songs like "In My Room" and "The Warmth of the Sun," but those tunes were reflecting a feeling that hadn't yet become overwhelming. By the end of 1964, the pressures were to prove too much for this still youthful man. Shortly after marrying sixteen-year-old Marilyn Rovell, Brian Wilson suffered a nervous breakdown. Before the break, Brian and the Beach Boys were to travel the world and enjoy fan acclaim second only to the Beatles. Troubled times were ahead, but first there was a peak.

Opposite, KFWB D.J. Wink Martindale wears a sign of the times, a Beatle Wig. Above, A Capitol publicity picture for 1964.

5.
DON'T WORRY BABY

Brian Wilson: "The Beatles' invasion shook me up an awfully lot . . . They eclipsed a lot [of what] we'd worked for . . . eclipsed the whole music world. Michael and I got together and had a meeting and we talked it over. We were very threatened by the whole thing."

To Mike Love, the Beach Boys really held their own: "Even with the Beatles' being enormously successful, we still had 'I Get Around'" as a number-one record at the height of Beatlemania. That song, backed by "Don't Worry, Baby," is one of the best single records ever released, and it became the group's first number-one hit. Mike also felt that the Beatles "further challenged Brian musically in his creativity."

Brian really was up to the challenge. He began the year by consolidating all his thoughts on cars and girls and hamburger stands into a huge hit, "Fun, Fun, Fun." It was one of the last hits to present a simplistic, trouble-free world.

Brian's world was growing increasingly difficult. Part of the problem was that Capitol Records still treated Brian as some kid who made a lot of hit records, and they never realized he was a sensitive young man. Incidents like the following story demonstrated Captiol's disregard for Brian as a person, and probably helped push Brian into a protective shell.

Roger Christian recalls that late in 1963 "Capitol was throwing a big reception at the Beverly Wilshire [Hotel] for Kyu Sakamoto, who had a big record called 'Sukiyaki.' The Beach Boys had had a couple of big records for Capitol, but they didn't have a party. So I was going and I asked Brian to come with me . . . we were writing together. We got there, and Brian was talking to somebody, and he came over kind of discouraged. Voyle Gilmore had told him that he had no business being there, he was upstaging Kyu. And I said, 'Just a minute, you're here as my guest, and we're writing some songs that are eventually going to make this goddam company some money. What is this little game?' This is just one example of the typical things Capitol would do."

Roger Christian was a D.J. at KFWB in Hollywood, and Gary Usher took Brian up to the station one night after Roger got off the air at midnight. They began writing songs together and Brian later noted that Roger "was like a guiding light to me." Brian and Roger spent many late nights eating hot fudge sundaes at Aldo's and talking and writing songs. Christian, very much a macho personality, is another admirer of Murry Wilson and he remembers how Murry had to fight the people at Capitol all the time. "It was only through Mr. Wilson's persistence that the Beach Boys did get a fair shake, because Capitol was bugged because they didn't record at the [Capitol] Tower; [also], they weren't crazy about the surf image."

Christian was intimately involved in the creative process with Brian in 1963 and early 1964. One song they co-authored, "Don't Worry Baby," became the first pop standard created by Brian Wilson. Although its some-

Clockwise from above: Brian with Roger Christian at NBC Studios in Burbank; a French EP (extended play) record; From Carl's Hollywood Professional School yearbook, spring 1964; Brian with Earl Leaf promoting Teen Set Magazine.

times indecipherable lyric was love-oriented, not everyone realized that Brian was singing about a drag race. Regardless of the lyrical content, the melody is so good that many singers and groups have recorded the song, usually rewriting the lyrics. As recently as the summer of 1977, the song was a major hit for B.J. Thomas, an indication of the staying power of the music.

Christian was witness to many of the battles that the Beach Boys had with Capitol and feels that to "the people at Capitol . . . the Beach Boys had always been a thorn in their side, Mr. Wilson especially, because he wasn't going to put up with anything that wasn't fair and square." Capitol was always trying to assign overhead costs to the Beach Boys, like shifting to their account a "five-thousand dollar expense for Studio A at Capitol" when the Beach Boys weren't even using the studio. Murry would have to fight the accountants. "So every time Murry would come to the [Capitol] Tower, Karl Engemann would get a few more gray hairs because he knew he'd have to referee a battle between Voyle and Murry." (As a brief aside, Karl Engemann is one of the few Capitol executives that the Beach Boys remember fondly, Audree Wilson noting that Engemann would often have dinner at the Wilson house. He was a gracious businessman.) Christian claims that "if it weren't for Murry in those early days, pushing, the royalties wouldn't have been what they were. . . . Murry fought hard to get things straight." As hard as Murry fought, it took a lawsuit and years of out-of-court wrangling in the late sixties before the Beach Boys got either a proper accounting of sales or the money that was due Brian for producer's royalties. The Beach Boys were taken advantage of by their record company, but that

COURTESY OF TOM NOLAN

wasn't rare. None of the early rock talent, with few exceptions, ever saw the money they really earned from records.

Back on the Beatlemania front, the Beach Boys embarked (in November) on a twenty-four day trip to England and the continent that included radio and television appearances, promotional stops, and a few concerts. The tour was one of Brian's last until 1976, and Roger Christian offers additional insight into how Brian felt about live performing: "Brian liked it for a while . . . but it was tiring on him. . . . Brian was a private person; he wanted to be left alone so he could create. The guys would come back from the tour all exhausted" and they would rest and relax. But "the record company would say to Brian, 'Okay, where's the single? Where's the album?' So he'd have to sit down and write it, arrange it, polish it all up, and go into the studio, perform it, and then get out of the studio and mix it and master it and *then* go back on the road again. He couldn't do it, there was no way he could do it."

The pressure from the record company was just one of the forces at work on

EARL LEAF

EARL LEAF

EARL LEAF

EARL LEAF

Above, The Beach Boys in an Austrian bierkeller (beer hall), November 1964. Earl Leaf: "Once, when we were in Munich, we'd had some Munich beer, and we were all kind of high. And over dinner, Brian, he was really smashed, started talking about Audree, and then he began to cry about what a wonderful woman she was. And tears were streaming down his face into the spaghetti. Then he ran over across the dance floor and went up to everyone of the Beach Boys and said, 'Isn't mother a wonderful woman?' That's how far gone they were on Audree." Far left, top, Carl, Brian, Al, and Mike à la the Beatles. Far left, bottom, Brian with Earl Leaf. Earl Leaf: "Once, I got them all lined up by a streetlight because I wanted to get the Arc de Triomphe in the background, (left top), Dennis started climbing the thing, and pretty soon, they were all climbing it. A cop came along, wanted to bring them all in. I think they even brought the paddywagon, but we talked them out of that." The Beach Boys' European tour included concerts in Stockholm and at the Olympia in Paris, radio and TV appearances in Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich, Rome and London, and a visit to Copenhagen.

ZOOM/DEZO HOFFMAN

Brian. As the music got more sophisticated, Brian relied more and more on studio musicians to get the sound he wanted. Christian remembers Brian's saying, "'I don't know how to tell Dennis that the drumming on "Little Deuce Coupe" isn't his.' Brian didn't want to hurt his brother's feelings." Christian reminded Brian that "in the past when you haven't felt something was right, and let it go, you've lived to regret it. Dennis'll understand. He won't be very happy about it, but . . . everyone in the group really respects you and your opinions." It was never easy for Brian to hurt anyone; often he would take the hurt himself. All Brian wanted to do was make music, but the politics got to him.

Brian's confidence could also be easily shattered. Brian was planning to release "Little Honda" as a single, but as Chuck Britz recalls, "All you had to do was have somebody give him some doubts and it would make him start thinking negatively. And it would hurt. It could be a perfect stranger. [This happened] mainly because he wanted to please everyone." Brian decided not to release the song and The Hondells had a huge hit with the disc, produced by Gary Usher who copied Brian's harmony lines note for note.

Brian's efforts to create the best records were inhibited not only by outsiders, but from within himself. Roger Christian recalls that "as confident as he was, or as he should have been because he was a master, he still needed someone to encourage him and give him confidence. . . . Brian was the most talented creator I'd ever worked with. Brian could do it all, he could write the words, write the music, teach the guys the harmony, produce the record." In explaining why

Brian often worked with a collaborator, Christian feels "that sometimes somebody just needs a sounding board, almost like a competition thing. . . . Two creative people get together and they bring out the best in each other. [But] he did a lot of things by himself."

For Brian, songwriting was a solitary pursuit. In a conversation with writer/publicist/photographer Earl Leaf in 1964, Brian described the drives and inspirations involved in songwriting. "I usually get down to writing songs late at night . . . I'm very inspired—mostly when I'm feeling inferior. Probably my greatest motive for writing songs is an inferiority feeling, or I'm lacking in something. I have to feel right on top. I just have that competition feeling. I hear something that is really good and all of a sudden, I feel like an ant. I must create something to bring me up on top. Perhaps some write because they think of money. Money is not my motive. I've never written a note because I think the song will make money." Brian's sense of inferiority and lack of self-worth would become increasingly troublesome. The financial security the songwriting gave Brian was important at first, but as the years wore on, money didn't mean a lot to him except that he could indulge a few special whims, like eventually building a home studio.

Above left, Mike and Brian in New York City. Above right, Dennis. Below, Al, Mike, Carl are in a dressing room with an unknown friend. Earl Leaf: "Carl's a serious type of guy; he used to take the responsibility that everything would go smoothly. When all the other guys were flopping around, Carl would be making out the program for the evening, talking to the business managers, etc. He held it all together at times. And he worried a lot, but he never complained." As Audree Wilson notes, "Carl was born thirty."

Even in those fabulously successful days, "Brian was up and down," according to Christian. "One day he knew he had it made, and the world was digging what he did, and the next day one little thing would happen and put him on a downer. When he was happy, he produced great stuff. It was easy for me to see that and encourage him." As an example of the kind of negative things that could happen, Christian relates the story of what happened when the Beach Boys recorded "The Lord's Prayer." Capitol "sort of went, 'I don't know,' and that crushed Brian because that was a work of art. No matter how great his accomplishments were, he'd pick up the negative vibes and retreat." Brian was well aware of what the pressure was doing to him. He told Earl Leaf that he just wanted "to adjust to the music industry as much as possible." Brian must have also been feeling quite uncertain about the future in September '64 because he told Earl that "I only like to plan not more than a month ahead of time."

Lyrically, Brian was expressing the first signs of his dissatisfaction with the group's career direction. In "I Get Around," he served notice that he was

looking for new horizons. *I'm getting bugged driving up and down the same old strip. I've gotta find a new place where the kids are hip.*

In "When I Grow Up," Brian expressed his anxieties over the changes he would experience as an adult. *Will I dig the same things that turned me on as a kid? Will I look back and say that I wish I hadn't done what I did? What will I be? When I grow up to be a man.* The song featured one of Brian's most inventive arrangements to date (Brian: "I think I took a chance, made it a little bit too modern and harmonic. I'm kind of worried about it."), and the background vocals ominously tolled the years as they quickly passed by—"23-24, Won't last forever." Brian's almost prescient awareness of his future is frightening in retrospect. There is no question about it. Brian in 1964 was a man who knew that his life would soon be taking new directions, and he was concerned as to how he would cope with adulthood complicated by massive success.

One other song played a role in an ironic misprint. The last song on side two of the group's final original studio LP in 1964 was called "Don't Back Down." On early copies, the song was titled "Don't Break Down" on the album covers. This rather prophetic mistake aside, the song contains an interesting lyric sung from a parental point of view. "Don't Back Down (Not My Boys)." Brian was talking to the surfers when he sang, *You gotta be a little nuts / Show 'em now who's got guts.* As Brian sang it, you just *Grit your teeth / They don't back down.*" Was Brian singing the song to himself? This excerpt from a 1977 interview indicates that it was at least a possibility: "There was a compulsion involved [in pouring out singles]. We did it out of a compulsive drive. You see so many pressures happening at once, and you grit your teeth, and you more or less flip out. There were a lot of pressures and a lot of scenes going down that I couldn't handle, that I couldn't quite understand, that I couldn't fathom." Before the pressure forced a cave-in,

Brian thinks it put him "in a state of creative panic, where you begin to use your creativity to give to people. Something was lacking. I felt the creativity but something was lacking; something was wrong somewhere."

As the pressures mounted, the group

Above left, Brian greets D.J. B. Mitchell Reed. Sonny peers around Cher. Left to right, Shelly Fabares, Brian, Mike, Reed. Lesley Gore is on Cher's left. Below left, In Hawaii in 1964 Jan and Dean were among the supporting acts at a Beach Boys concert. Clockwise around the table from the front left: Bruce Johnston, Jan Berry, Dean Torrence, and Terry Melcher with friends.

COURTESY OF THE BEACH BOYS

BEACH BOYS END AN 'EMOTIONAL STRUGGLE'

began to reflect the tension and they fired Murry as their manager after an Australian tour. As Audree recalls, "There was a lot of strife and problems in Australia." Dennis says that the guys just got tired of "hundred-dollar fines for swearing," but it was more than that. As Brian remarked, "We changed from our father to outside management basically because of the emotional strain we were under. We didn't feel that we were driving for the things we should have been since we are in a golden position to progress and become possibly more successful. We felt that even though my father had his heart behind it and had good intentions, because of the situation between father and son, you just seem to go nowhere. It's an emotional struggle, and that's more or less a crippled situation, so we eliminated it. It was done more or less maturely. Finally, we decided he is better as a father than a manager."

The firing left Murry "just devastated," Audree notes. "It really crushed him. And he went to bed for about five weeks, totally just stayed in bed." That was an interesting precedent for behavior that would soon get Brian labeled "crazy."

On December 7, 1964, Brian married sixteen-year-old Marilyn Rovell. Audree Wilson remembers that although "Brian had known her for quite a while, my husband was scared. Oh God! He would have had them stay unmarried for a long time had he had his own way. I don't suppose he ever thought there was anyone good enough for his boys; he was one of those kind of fathers."

Shortly after the wedding, Brian and the Beach Boys left for a short tour of the Southwest. At the airport, Brian thought he saw Marilyn and Mike Love exchange romantic glances. Brian, in a 1966 interview with Earl Leaf, described what happened that night. "We were on tour December twenty-third. I said goodbye to Marilyn. We weren't getting along too good. The plane had been in the air only five minutes. I told Al Jardine that I was going to crack up any minute. He told me to cool it. Then I started crying. I put a pillow over my face and began screaming and yelling. Then I started telling people I'm not getting off the plane . . . started to get far out, coming undone, having a breakdown, and I just let myself go completely. I dumped myself out of the seat and all over the plane I let myself go emotionally. They took care of me well. They were as understanding as they could be. They knew what was happening, and I was coming apart. The rubber band had stretched as far as it would go.

"That night, I cooled off, and I played that show. Next morning, I woke up with the biggest knot in my stomach, and I felt like I was going out of my

Above left, The Beach Boys perform in Australia, January 1964. The "emotional struggle" centered around the firing of Murry. Above, Brian signs autographs for New York City fans in Sept.

mind. In other words, it was a breakdown period. I must have cried about fifteen times the next day. Every half hour I'd start crying. Carl came to my hotel room, I saw him and I just slammed the door in his face. I didn't want to see him or anybody, because I was flipping out. Nobody knew what was going on. I wouldn't talk. I just put my head down and wouldn't even look at anybody. That night, the road manager took me back to L.A., and I didn't want to see anybody except my mother. She was at the airport to meet me. As soon as I saw her, I started crying again. I just needed to hear her talk to me; it's a kind of security to be able to talk to your mother as I can talk to Audree. We went over to the house and we had a three-hour talk there. I told her things I'd never told anyone in my life, and she sort of straightened me out. Generally, I

COURTESY OF TOM NOLAN

COURTESY OF TOM NOLAN

COURTESY OF TOM NOLAN

From Carl Wilson's high school senior yearbook: Above, Carl and date. Far left, Marilyn Rovell. Left, Diane Rovell; Below, Carl. Bottom, Brian and Mike used to have pretend fights.

COURTESY OF TOM NOLAN

dumped out a lifelong hangup."

Remembering that night, Audree Wilson describes what happened. "We received a phone call . . . saying that Brian was coming home and that he had been crying and breaking down and couldn't carry on. He [Dick Cummings—an accountant and a road manager] made it very clear that only I was to meet Brian, not his father. . . . Once again, my husband was just crushed, and oh, just furious with me." Instead of being totally concerned with what was happening to Brian, Murry had found a reason to get angry and be hurt. As Brian said, looking back on the whole experience, "My dad always had a problem of understanding people and their feelings."

Audree Wilson resumes the story: "I met Brian at the airport, and we got in the car" and went to the house in Hawthorne, which the Wilsons still owned even though they were living in Whittier. At the house, Brian was "really in a bad state, he was crying and then he would stop crying, and he'd talk about—" At that point, Audree refused to reveal any more. The "lifelong hangup" Brian unloaded that night is a secret that Brian and Audree still share. The

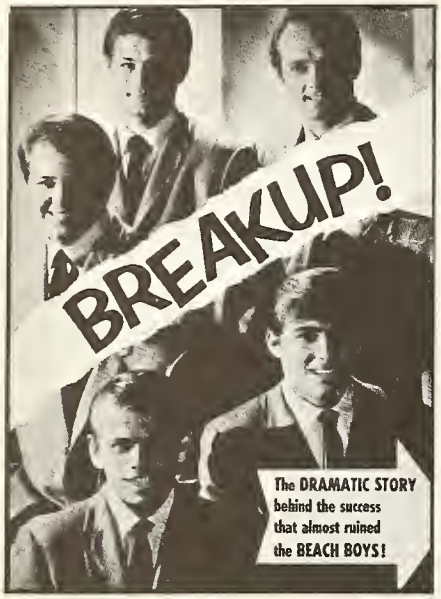
fact that Brian didn't want Murry at the airport indicates that Murry was part of the problem. The precise cause of Brian's first breakdown, or the two that followed in the next seventeen months, will never be known for sure, but some of the serious problems certainly centered on the pressures from the record company, his family, and the group.

As 1964 ended, Brian Wilson noted that "there were four Beach Boys on the road . . . they finished that tour without me. When they came back, I didn't want to talk to them or anybody. I just wanted to sit and think and rest, pull myself together, check my life out, and once again evaluate what I am, what I'm doing, and what I should be doing." The Beach Boys' troubled leader was at home, making a fateful decision.

The Beach Boys made their first network TV appearance on the Steve Allen show singing "Surfin' U.S.A." In the mid-60s they performed on a number of shows including Bob Hope (above), Andy Williams (opposite below left), Johnny Carson, Jack Benny, Ed Sullivan, and Shindig. The group also sang in films, The Girls on the Beach, *and* The Monkey's Uncle *below which starred Annette. Opposite bottom, right after the initial theatrical release of* The T.A.M.I. Show, *the Beach Boys scenes were cut out due to legal difficulties. Roger Christian recalls that at* The T.A.M.I. Show, *Brian was nervous but "when Mike Love introduced everybody, Brian got more of an ovation than anybody, and he was just aglow. . . . That was a genuine thrill at the time."*

WALT DISNEY

PARAMOUNT PICTURES CORPORATION



By early 1965, there were two separate and very distinct "groups." On the road, the Beach Boys were five guys singing the hits night after night . . . Brian Wilson's musical messengers to the world. Back home in Los Angeles, Brian Wilson was writing songs, producing records, preparing backing tracks that awaited the return of the touring Beach Boys for their vocals. Sometimes, Brian didn't wait, and he did all the singing. Brian was a self-contained band himself; he could play most every instrument and sing all the parts. When the group was in town, they were Brian's vocal musical instrument.

In popular music, the year was one of considerable upheaval. The Byrds broke through with Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man." The Beatles' *Rubber Soul* album was more complex lyrically than their earlier work, reflecting Dylan's influence as well as their use of an exotic "new" herb. The effect Dylan was having on rock music didn't go unnoticed anywhere, even in the hedonistic sounds of the Beach Boys.

Because Brian Wilson was always progressing, the new lyrical slant of pop music didn't catch him by surprise. In songs like "When I Grow Up" and "Please Let Me Wonder," Brian had already begun to concern himself with more adult themes. It was a very short step for him to create the introspective *Pet Sounds* that brought him both critical acclaim and business problems. The Beach Boys themselves, underneath the striped shirts, were also growing and changing. Two more of them were now married. There was a definite disparity between the group's image in the fan magazines of the time and the reality of their non-Beach Boys existence.

REX FEATURES

Opposite top, The fan magazines speculated over the internal jealousies that might force the Beach Boys to self destruct.
Opposite bottom left, Brian Wilson wasn't the first songwriter to notice and pay homage to the beauty of his home state.
Opposite bottom right, Bob Dylan.

6.
PLEASE LET ME WONDER

For Brian Wilson, 1965 was the last year that he bowed to commercial pressures. The record company (and the fans) demanded tunes like "California Girls" and "Help Me Rhonda," and Brian grudgingly obliged, marking time until he was ready to spring his concept on the music world. That surprise was a year away, and Brian Wilson in 1965 wasn't the troubled, brooding introvert so much as he was a singleminded artist in pursuit of an ultimate sound and a man in search of himself.

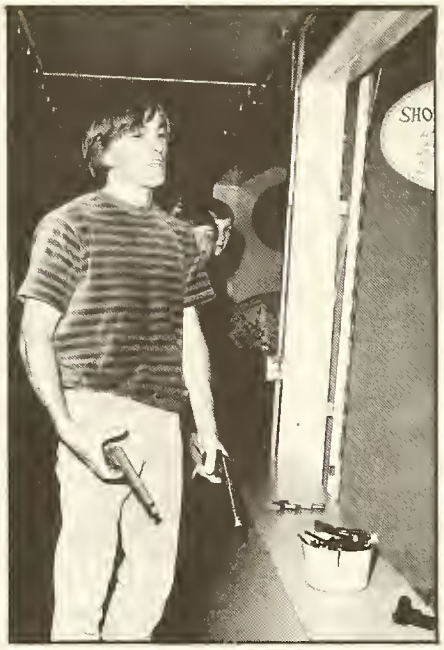
Brian's retirement from the road didn't really hurt the group's reception at their concerts and personal appearances. The Beach Boys sounded and looked the same as always, and their fans sensed nothing amiss. At that stage of the group's career, there weren't that many fans who knew the individuals in the band except for the girls screaming for Dennis. The Beach Boys have always been a sound and a feeling; they've been a perpetual good-time music machine. In 1965, the faces were slightly different, but the music hadn't really changed.

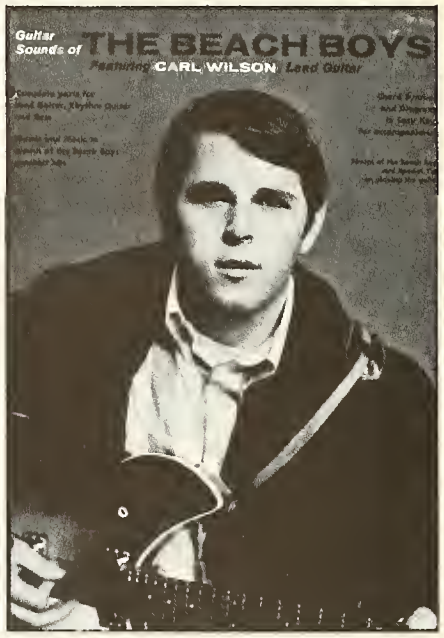
Brian stayed at home and made new music; the Beach Boys went on the road and recreated the older sounds. What isn't so well known is that in 1965, Brian took his first step towards self-discovery with LSD. Drugs, quitting the road, experimental sounds—three years into their existence and the Beach Boys' leader was undergoing significant personal changes. Problems soon arose, as Brian moved ahead of the rest of the group. As one writer put it, "Brian wanted to drop a tab [of acid], while the other guys wanted to keep hanging out at the hamburger stand." Those growing differences would be reflected in the music, and the dichotomy of their personalities would eventually create conflict within the group, particularly between Mike and Brian. That fight was still a year away, but its beginnings were rooted in Brian's experimental 1965.

It's been said that Brian Wilson, despite all the pressures of the business, rarely did anything important that he didn't want to do. By the end of 1964 Brian no longer wanted to tour; he was into making records and wanted to devote his time to studio music. His breakdown provided him with the excuse he needed to get off the road, and he rapidly reached his decision to retire from live performing. Now, he had to tell the Beach Boys. It was during the recording of *The Beach Boys Today* album that Brian dropped his bombshell.

"One night, I told the guys I wasn't going to perform onstage any more, that I can't travel. I told them I foresee a beautiful future for the Beach Boys group, but the only way we could achieve it was if they did their job and I did mine. That night, when I gave them the news of my decision, they all broke down. I'd already gone through my breakdown, and now it was their turn. When I told them, they were shook. Mike had a couple of tears in his eyes, he couldn't take the reality that their big brother wasn't ever going to be onstage with them again. It was a blow to their sense of security, of course."

Brian, in his interview with Earl Leaf in 1966, remembered how the guys reacted to his announcement: "Mike lost his cool and felt like there was no reason to go on. Dennis picked up a big ashtray and told some people to get out of there or he'd hit them on the head with it. He kind of blew it, y'know. . . . Al Jardine broke out in tears and broke out in stomach cramps. He was all goofed up and my mother, who was there, had to take care of him." One of the Beach Boys did handle it well. "Good old Carl was the only guy who never got into a bad emotional scene. He just sat there and didn't get uptight about it. He always kept a cool head. If it weren't for Carl, it's hard to say where we'd be. He's the greatest stabilizing influence in the group. He's been like that ever since he was a kid, and he's like that now together with a lot of experience and brains. Carl has mastered his emotions.





Left, While the 1965 publicity pictures claimed that Brian was a Beach Boy, he was no longer touring. Above left, Dennis. Above, Carl's guitar playing was directly descended from the licks of Chuck Berry and Dick Dale.

He cooled Dennis, Mike and Al down."

Because of his upbringing, Brian felt that quitting the road wasn't a manly thing to do—"A winner never quits and a quitter never wins"—and he knew in advance that his decision to stop touring would bring him much grief from his family and the group. Brian also knew that it was the right thing to do, for his own personal survival as well as for his musical development. There really was no other alternative. In that '66 interview with Earl Leaf, Brian explained fully his reasons: "I felt I had no choice. I was run down mentally and emotionally because I was running around, jumping on jets, one-night stands, also producing, writing, arranging, singing, planning, teaching." According to Brian, it was "to the point where I had no peace of mind, no chance to actually sit down and think or even rest. I was so mixed-up and so overworked." Brian summed up his problems in making the break. "What it amounted to was a guilt feeling. I knew I should have stopped going on tours much earlier to do justice to our recordings and business operations. I was also under pressure from my old man [Murry] who figured I'd be a traitor if I didn't travel on one-nighters with the other guys. . . . I had a lot of static from everyone outside the group as well as the members. The only way I could do it was breaking down as I did."

Nervous breakdowns are often regarded as escape valves, the only way out of an untenable situation. Life on the road was unacceptable for Brian Wilson, and he had to get off the road. He knew he couldn't quit without a good excuse, and the breakdown, as real as it was, provided Brian with that excuse.

Brian's guilt for quitting was inappropriate but that retrospective comment doesn't help Brian. What it does is point out that there was a basic battle raging within Brian that centered around a very crucial area. Would Brian do what was best for Brian, or would he do his "manly duty" and what was best for everyone else? It is a classic artistic dilemma. An artist must put aside obligations to family and friends; he must put his art and himself first. For a while, Brian was able to do that to a remarkable degree, but the clashing emotions of artistic integrity versus family responsibilities would eventually be resolved in favor of the family. When Brian was hurt, even

though his family caused much of that pain, he retreated to the safety of the family situation. The family's way of life may not have been what Brian wanted, but it was a secure existence. Artists rarely have secure or safe lives. Brian ventured out into the artistic world, and wounds inflicted upon him by that world, combined with the effects of LSD, drove him into retreat. It was and still is a crime that Brian, who really only wants to make music, has to deal with so much "static." The static eventually overwhelmed Brian.

That, however, was all in the future. Back in '65, Brian stood up for his artistic beliefs and remembered saying, "If you want me to be able to be creative like I really want to, I'm going to have to stay at home." As Brian recalled, "Sure enough, I got my way." Indeed, for a short time, Brian did get his way. Yet that first breakdown became part of a pattern that would repeat itself with increasing and alarming regularity. Brian would eventually deal with his problems only by retreating and/or having a nervous breakdown, and it would become a familiar role, a comfortable role, and most definitely a very dangerous game.

In the Earl Leaf interview, Brian had noted, "I used to be Mr. Everything." Quitting the road was Brian's first step away from the responsibilities of pop stardom. It was hardly the last.

Above, (below and opposite bottom left), Glen Campbell is a Beach Boy for a few months until he is replaced by Bruce Johnston, (opposite top and opposite bottom right). Audree Wilson recalls that "Glen is tall, and his hair is lighter than Brian's, but a lot of kids in the audience would think he was Brian. They'd yell 'Brian! Brian!'" Although the Beach Boys asked Glen to join permanently, he refused. "If the Beach Boys did something, then I did it. And I didn't like that at all. . . . I'm probably too much of an individual."

The Beach Boys were now faced with the task of replacing Brian on tour. Glen Campbell was the first substitute, and although he fit in musically, Glen wasn't comfortable as a Beach Boy. The next man to fill in for Brian in concert stayed for seven years. In 1965, Bruce Johnston was a staff producer at Columbia Records. He also was one-half of the musical duo of Bruce and Terry (Melcher) who made Beach Boys-soundalike records, most notably "Summer Means Fun." Bruce and Terry were also the studio voices of the Ripchords, who had a top-five hit with another Beach Boys-imitation record, "Hey Little Cobra." Terry (Doris Day's son) becomes a part of the story later on as one of Brian's few trusted friends.

When Bruce received that fateful phone call, he was a perfect fit for the Beach Boys' situation. As Bruce recalls, Mike Love called him in early 1965 wondering if Bruce knew of anybody who could fill in for Glen Campbell, who couldn't make part of a tour. Bruce couldn't find anybody (his search in-

COURTESY OF MICHELE MYER

cluded current touring bass player Ed Carter) and offered his own services. Bruce flew to New Orleans, rehearsed a couple of songs and became a Beach Boy in one night. After a few shows, Glen rejoined the touring band, and Bruce became an observer and a student as Carl taught Bruce the songs on the bass. On April 9, at a Wilmington, Delaware, concert, Bruce became a full-fledged bass-playing member of the band, and Campbell didn't do any tours after that.

Bruce claims he "didn't want to join permanently. . . . After that two-week tour, we came home and I thought, 'Okay, now Brian'll bounce back, or Glen will bounce back or they'll get someone.'" Instead, Bruce went to his first Beach Boys sessions as a singer. "Brian just said, 'Here, sing a part' and I sang a part and it worked." That became part of "California Girls" and Bruce has been on virtually every album since; even after he parted company with the Beach Boys, he always seemed to be called in to do some singing.

Bruce really fit perfectly. His falsetto voice sounded a lot like Brian's; he was young and handsome and looked like a surfing Californian. In those first days, Bruce was known as the "Phantom"

Beach Boy, but his talents as a musician, arranger, and songwriter helped fill the creative void left by Brian's eventual withdrawal from the Beach Boys records.

The Beach Boys road unit was again complete, but Brian Wilson's world was starting to take a direction toward the frontier of the 1960s—inner space. In 1966, Brian told writer Tom Nolan: "About a year ago, I had what I consider a very religious experience. I took LSD, a full dose of LSD, and later, another time, I took a smaller dose. And I learned a lot of things, like patience, understanding. I can't teach you or tell you what I learned from taking it, but I consider it a very religious experience." In 1977, Brian noted: "I had one retreat before *Pet Sounds*, which was LSD, and then about a year worth of paranoia. In that year, I did 'California Girls' and 'Help Me Rhonda' and stuff like that." What those somewhat contradictory statements indicate is Brian's changed perspective on those times. Appearing on the Mike Douglas Show in 1976, Brian claimed that LSD "shattered my mind." It is impossible to measure the effects of acid on Brian, particularly when you consider that his first acid forays were followed by *Pet Sounds* and "Good Vibrations." Some people who know Brian feel that his alleged late '66/early '67 acid activities are what sent him into his retreat.

Back in '65, Brian's experimenting with drugs, particularly LSD, was way ahead of the rest of the world and that

You're invited... to a BEACH BOYS recording session party!

This is how it all started: an informal party in Manhattan Beach, relaxing and singing and just having a good time – and then someone thought it would be a groovy idea to record the party. Not the whole party of course, but the songs and some of the chatter-patter. Because the group was the Beach Boys – one of the most original and popular groups in America today – they did just that. TeenSet takes you from the party to the recording studio (which was a kind of party in itself), and tells just what does go on.

A recording session with the Beach Boys is much more than a recording session. It is a social hour, dinner hour, rehearsal – and it takes much more than an hour. Everything from impromptu paro-

includes the music world. The Beatles and acid didn't really meet until later, when they helped popularize "tripping" as part of the psychedelic lifestyle. LSD in those "pre-acid" days was a beautiful experience for Brian. He told a number of people that LSD helped him to see himself for the first time. At the time, it was a spiritual awakening for Brian. With a new perspective of himself, Brian's music took a radical shift. Rather than a reflection of the world around him, Brian's music became, in his own words, "the deepest expression of my soul." Brian looked at his music as a way to reach people. Withdrawn from the daily interaction of on-the-road life, somewhat secluded in his own home or the recording studio, Brian used his songs to talk to his millions of "friends." Brian, in 1965, didn't "think there could be a more beautiful way of communication."

Besides Brian's need to "speak" to people through his music, songwriting was a way to prove his worth, to himself and to Murry, who was still pushing Brian to have more hits. Except now, it was from a different angle. Murry had formed a Beach Boys–imitation group, the Sunrays, and father and son were now in direct competition.

Although many of the lyrics remained within the 'fun in the sun' vein, Brian's personal changes were quickly absorbed within the music, which was coming together in an astounding fashion.

The first album of 1965, *The Beach Boys Today,* perfectly reflected the new Beach Boys set-up and also showcased Brian's personal writing. Side one, the fast side, consisted mostly of hits that had been written and recorded in 1964. Side two, the slow side, had the songs that were very special to Brian—songs like "In the Back of My Mind," "Please Let Me Wonder," and "She Knows Me Too Well." The back of the *Today* album graphically showed the growing creative division that Brian was working around. The headline reads, "A Program of Big Beach Boy Favorites . . . Plus Some Great New Brian Wilson Songs." Those Brian songs were and are great. Working mostly without a collaborator, Brian was saying exactly what was on his mind. Like little pools of emotion, these songs unabashedly and sometimes melodramatically expressed Brian's post-adolescent anxiety, a mode of expression that would see full flower on *Pet Sounds.* For the first time, Brian was writing the words and the music almost totally without outside interference, and the two meshed perfectly. Sometimes melancholy, sometimes searching, it all came out in the music, and Brian's production enhanced these songs with the first serious stirrings of orchestration.

How did Brian put his feelings into the music? He described the lengthy process of putting together the ideal creative atmosphere with the right frame of mind in a fan magazine article titled, "Brian Wilson: Why I Stay Home": "Six months ago, I bought a new house up in Beverly Hills. . . . I arranged the house so I had a big room full of music and atmosphere, and I started to plan the new direction of the group. . . . I wanted to move ahead in sounds and melodies and moods. For months, I plotted and planned.

"For a month or two, I sat either at a huge Spanish table looking out over the hills, just thinking, or at the piano playing 'feels.' 'Feels,'" Brian explained, "are musical ideas, riffs, bridges, fragments of themes. A phrase here and there." This method of songwriting had ambitious aims. "I wanted to write a song containing more than one level. Eventually, I would like to see longer singles . . . so that the song can be more meaningful. . . . A song can, for instance, have movements, in the same

way as a classical concerto, only capsulized." Long before "Good Vibrations" was recorded, the ideas that were ultimately to shape that song were already swirling in his head.

Brian's ideas were usually exciting to the group, although he noted that "we're often into different things." Unfortunately, Capitol felt that Brian was moving in a direction that wouldn't be as successful commercially. Audree Wilson remembers that after quitting touring, "Brian threw himself into [making records] with everything he had

and seemed to be very happy doing that. He really handled the record company's requests very well; he just plugged away and did it." Capitol wanted Brian to keep churning out those sprightly melodies and good-time lyrics. It is ironic that during a troubled period in his life, Brian wrote a song called "California Girls," a song that epitomized to the world what the Beach Boys were, and the fantasy they represented. In this ultimate salute to his home state, Brian may have created a greater fantasy world because he needed a more powerful escape. Brian once said that "I can't listen to the vocal," because he feels that Mike Love rushed the singing. The song itself has a stirring introduction that majestically unfolds into one of Brian's most sophisticated and intriguing productions to that point. The song created an image that has become part of the Beach Boys and it is unlikely that they have since given a concert without performing it.

In mid-'65, Brian was in a lyrical holding pattern with the Beach Boys, so he stepped outside the group to produce a Glen Campbell record, "Guess I'm

Nick Venet: "Most of Brian's co-writers, except Van Dyke Parks, were amateurs. Anything that Brian and a collaborator did, he could have done eventually alone. He was in the process of doing it when somebody dropped in. [They would] join in on him or sucker in on him or latch on to him or move their way in by thinking of it a minute before he did. [But] he was going in that direction." Concerning the insanity of the record business, Venet points out that "they pressured him into doing an album every twenty-four hours. They [the records] were incredible, but I think they also were burning him up and making him crazy."

Dumb." It was Brian's most ambitious outside production effort, and one of the first records that consolidated all his ideas into a coherent sound. The instrumental sophistication, the intricate voices, the forlorn lyrics—this song and production were an obvious foreshadowing of *Pet Sounds*. It was a commercial bomb.

The Beach Boys' records in 1965 were only part of the growing experimentation that Brian was pursuing. Although the *Summer Days (and Summer Nights!!)* album was for the most part not lyrically

demanding, Brian's musical growth was continuing at a rapid pace. Brian was approaching the Phil Spector sound he yearned for, but for the first time, it was apparent that Brian had the potential to outdo Spector. The airy, spacey vocals, the inspired arrangements, the full orchestration of rock rhythms and horns and strings, the unique melodies . . . Brian was stretching out his musical skills. On a *Summer Days* song like "Let Him Run Wild" or on "Guess I'm Dumb," Brian exhibited many of the textures that would characterize 1966's masterpiece, *Pet Sounds*. That progress, however, was causing commercial difficulties.

In the fall of 1965, the Beach Boys released "The Little Girl I Once Knew" as a single. It was not an instant hit, even though it was the followup to smashes like "Help Me Rhonda" and "California Girls." Radio programmers, notoriously conservative, didn't know what to make of this avante-garde record and with good reason. Full of complete stops (dead air) and tempo changes, it was jarring to top-forty sensibilities. When it

stalled at "only" number 20, it became the group's first "flop" single since "Ten Little Indians." The record's quality didn't prevent its relative failure with the record-buying public.

In the midst of all of Brian's growth and musical experimentation, Capitol Records was pushing the Beach Boys for more product. Capitol wanted another album, and Brian, in the beginning stages of *Pet Sounds*, wasn't about to rush out another package. He'd already done one "quickie" that year (*Summer Days*). So the Beach Boys decided to do another "live" album, except that instead of Sacramento, this one was to be recorded in the studio at a simulated *Beach Boys' Party!* in Studio 3 at Western Recorders. The record itself is a charming period piece, and contains more of the self-parody that the Beach Boys had explored on earlier studio snippets like "Cassius Love vs. Sonny Wilson," "Our Favorite Recording Sessions," and "Bull Session with 'Big Daddy.'" The Beach Boys' humor was corny and high school locker-roomish, but they could poke fun at themselves and others in a very unself-conscious way that translated into a lot of fun for the fans.

At the same time, one wonders why the group would do such a light album when Brian's music was becoming so involved. Carl Wilson explains that "it was really just to give us time. We just did that so we'd have time to do *Pet Sounds*. It only took a few days, and that was it. I thought it was a pretty odd record at the time. But then, we were having pressures from Capitol Records to give us another one of these [fun records], give us another record. So we got caught up" in the business part of it. "We really did."

The Beach Boys' Party! album was a quick way to get "product" out. It became the biggest seller in their history (not including hits repackages) and spawned a number-one single, "Barbara Ann," a song that featured the lead singing duo of Brian and Dean (Torrence). The song was also the first major hit for the group in England and opened up that important market for the group.

The release of "Barbara Ann," however, sealed the doom of "The Little Girl I Once Knew" and was an unexpected and unwanted shift in style for the group. The Beach Boys hadn't been told that it was to be released as a single. Not that they were displeased at its huge success, but at a time when the group's music was progressing, it didn't help the audience adjust to that shift when the record company "snuck out" a record that further cemented their funloving image.

The release of "Barbara Ann" and the *Party* album was the turning point. It was the peak of the Beach Boys' popularity with the American record-buying public, and with the exception of "Good Vibrations," the Beach Boys' days as hitmakers and million-sellers were just about over. Simultaneously, Brian Wilson was in the midst of a musical maturation that would influence virtually every rock musician and change the course of pop music.

The Beach Boys ended 1965 with a gold record and a big hit single, but it was the last time that the teenage public and the Beach Boys were on the same wavelength. For Brian Wilson, *Party* was a meaningless record because he wasn't emotionally involved with it, or for that matter with the Beach Boys. Brian was at work, hard at work on his "solo" album. It was to be called *Pet Sounds*.

The Beach Boys' Sound

"The first time we went into a studio," Brian Wilson recalled, "we were like five green idiots. All I know is that we had a song and we'd rehearsed it. It wasn't like we knew what we were doing."

The recording experience that Brian referred to resulted in the first of the group's hits. It was only a short time before Brian developed into one of, if not the best, record producer in the history of popular music.

One of the things that made Brian unique is that he heard sounds and tried sound combinations that nobody else ever attempted. Maybe it was his deafness in one ear. It's possible that Brian heard different sounds because he heard differently than a "normal" person. His hearing impairment meant he couldn't grasp stereo, and all the albums Brian produced in the 1960s were made in monophonic sound. Like Phil Spector's legendary "Wall of Sound," Brian's records were so full that they didn't need the extra sound dimension. *Pet Sounds,* for example, was cut in mono. Nevertheless, it stands as an unparalleled sound achievement.

Even though he is almost totally deaf in one ear, Brian has near perfect pitch and remarkable hearing. Marilyn Wilson remembered, "Brian sat down and hummed each note of the piano to the [piano tuner]. Each note! It was Brian's tuning; he didn't want regular pitch, he wanted it tuned to his ears. He wanted the notes to ring a certain way—I could never explain it. But it was the greatest tuning job you ever heard." The first component of his musical skills was a superhuman hearing that allowed Brian to detect the slightest deviation from a note, a talent that eventually made the Beach Boys' harmonies a standard for other recording acts to try and match.

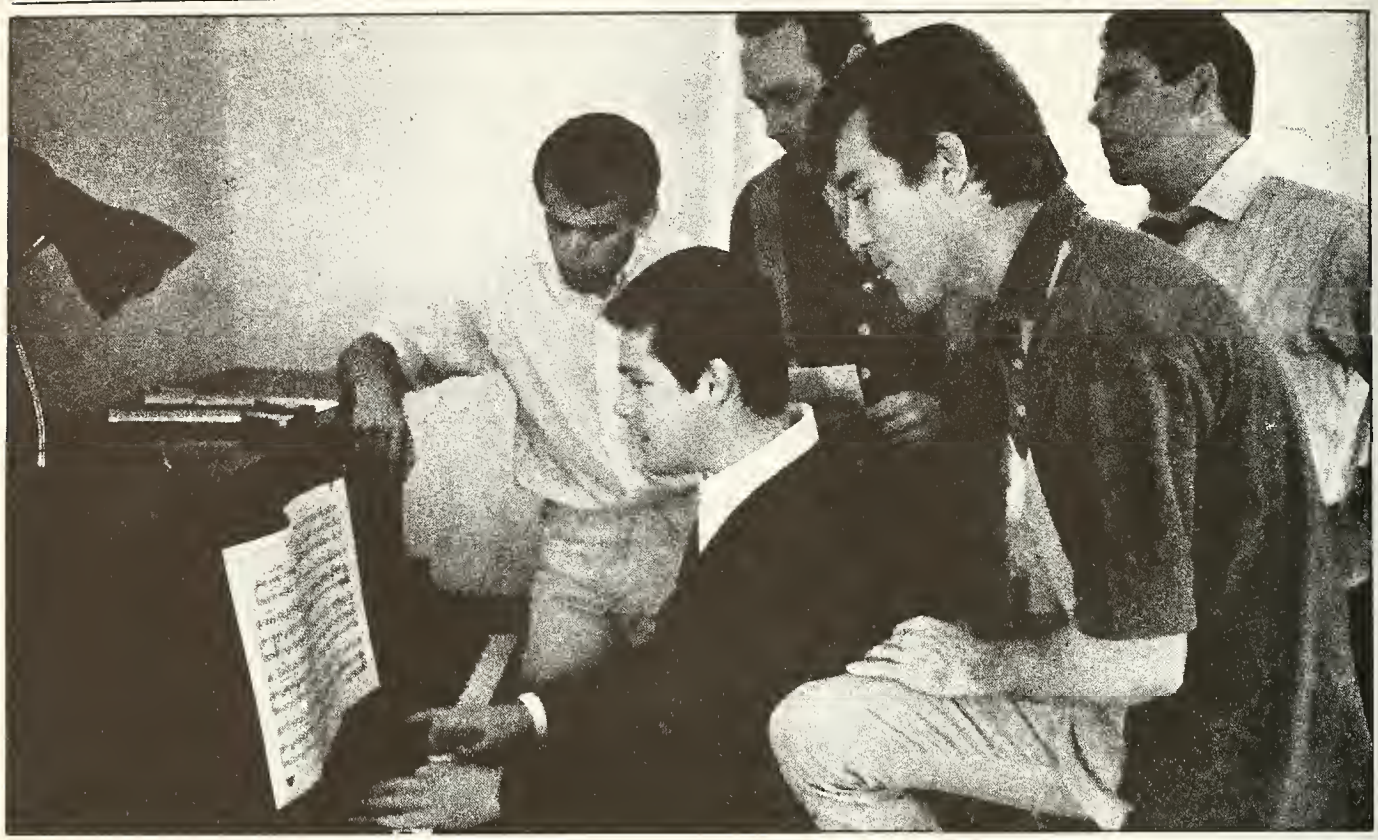
Jimmy Webb explains that "one of the secrets of how their voices blend is that they use very little vibrato, which is really old-style church singing of five or six hundred years ago. The way the voices fitted together was very complex, yet parts of it were very simple. They sang very straight tones. The voices all lie down beside each other very easily; there's no bumping between the voices because the pitch is very precise. Everybody knows the pitch, and they would sing it and do it until they got it right. That was especially obvious on *Pet Sounds.*" One aspect of their vocal blend that can't be taught is the influence of genes. With three brothers and a first cousin, the Beach Boys began with a certain natural blend.

Nick Venet notes that *Brian* was the perfectionist, the "first guy to do it until it was right. He damned everyone until it was right, and then he gave them the record . . . a lot of us would say, after about four hours, 'We'd better get off that tune.' Brian would hang in there for nine hours, no matter what the cost. I used to think he was crazy, but he was right. Brian was tough to work with. Brian really demanded. . . . If I had him under contract, he could take four years between records. As long as he was happy with the record, that's all."

The recording studio, like any musical instrument, requires a lot of practice before an artist can master it. There is a tremendous difference between performing a song live and capturing the feeling of the song on a record. Listening to the Beach Boys' records in chronological order, it is evident that their studio technique improved very quickly. In the beginning, like all new groups, the Beach Boys recorded efforts sounded primitive. "Surfin'" and the *Surfin' Safari* album were raw and unprofessional. That untrained vocal approach worked to the group's advantage because the singing had an energy that was so obviously youthful. That quality was part of the group's basic appeal.

After the first album, the Beach Boys records had a sound and feel that was unmistakable. The sound was easily imitated, as Jan and Dean and many others proved, but the emotion of the Beach Boys' records was inimitable.

Chuck Britz engineered almost all the Beach Boys' vocal sessions during the hitmaking years. He describes the group's recording process. "When I worked with him [Brian], we did everything live. After we did the instrumental tracks, I just set three mikes out there, and I'd put Carl, Dennis, and Al on one and I'd put Brian on one. And Brian would either sing into the lead mike when it was his lead or into the background mike when Mike sang lead. Mike was always on a separate mike. Brian always doubled the lead; there were times he would sing it so right on that it was hard to figure out



whether there was a delay or not. And, of course, I'd use pretty good echo . . . they could sing a capella and make tears come to your eyes."

In those early days the record making was a more collaborative process, but by 1964, when the group fired Murry, the Beach Boys' records were the sole province of Brian Wilson. Others could make suggestions, but Brian was in charge.

As Brian began experimenting with new sound textures, he found that the instrumental skills of the Beach Boys were inadequate. While the voices were always those of the band, from 1963 through 1966 Brian used studio musicians on the instrumental tracks. Chuck Britz engineered many of those sessions and remembered that "mostly everybody was playing to some degree, but basically . . . ninety-five percent of it was studio musicians." This didn't bother the Beach Boys. "Everybody seemed happy that they didn't have to be here for all that hard work."

Drummer Hal Blaine remembers that "Brian used to come in and sing us a song. We would individually take it over ourselves, the way we felt it. That's the way we made records. Brian would basically give us a chord chart, and we built our sections." Chuck Britz explains that Brian "knew basically every instrument he wanted to hear, and how he wanted to hear it, and the different formations that go into making a helluva good record. He had a form in his mind where he had a sound that he wanted to hear. What he would do is, we would call in all the musicians at one time (which was very costly), but still, that's the way he would do it. We'd start out maybe with a bass or maybe a marimba or something." And Brian would work with that instrument until it had the sound he wanted. There are stories that Brian would sometimes spend hours trying to get a bell to ring a certain way. This may sound eccentric, but Brian's devotion to sound was crucial. Tied in to that singleminded approach was Brian's childlike openness to new sounds. Jimmy Webb pictures Brian "like a child, making those early records, just experimenting, so involved with the process."

The process often took hours, as Brian and each musician worked out the parts. Chuck Britz recalls that "usually the horns were the last thing we'd work on. There'd be a guy in the horn section [most often, Steve Douglas] who would take Brian's idea and transpose it for the other horn players." Ray Pohlman did the same thing for the guitar players.

The recording sessions were long affairs because Brian spent so much time working out the individual sounds. But once each player had his part and the arrangement was complete, they might only need one or two takes to get the song down on tape. As the recordings were being made, Brian directed the mixing, all of which was done

in mono. After he had a satisfactory mix of instruments and vocals, they would listen to the recording on a small speaker. The purpose of this was to hear how the record would sound on a car radio.

Brian was famous for his ability to keep everything in his mind. He knew where he was going to use strings, horns, voices, etc. Steve Douglas recalls that it was Brian's ability to hear the whole record that was one of Brian's more astounding attributes as a producer. "We had a pretty large rhythm section over at Western 3, and Brian was trying to get the guitar to play a certain thing. And I remember Tommy Tedesco [a well-known session guitar player] saying, 'Hey man, it won't work; it just won't work.' And Brian said, 'Play it.' And it sounded like it didn't make sense until he overdubbed the strings and it all fell together. It was just amazing. He heard that in his head. That's what has always blown me out about him—that he could hear these complex orchestrations."

The ability to hear the entire record that so amazed the musicians was something Brian said that he picked up from Phil Spector. Brian reportedly would listen to Spector records like "Be My Baby" for hours on end, analyzing exactly what Spector was doing. From that intense listening, Brian learned "how to conceive of a framework of a song, to think in terms of production, rather than just songwriting. . . . I was unable to really think as a producer up until the time where I really got familiar with Phil Spector's work. . . . Then I started to see the point of making records. You're in the business to create a record. So you design the experience to be a record rather than just a song. It's good to take a good song and work with it. But it's that record that counts. It's the record that people listen to. It's the overall sound, what they're going to hear and experience in two and a half minutes that counts."

Brian and Phil Spector did some sessions together and Brian recalled that "I was able to perceive very much more than he thought I could. I was a little more alert . . . I basically knew all that was to be known about that [Wall of Sound] simply by listening, using my ears." Brian explained that Spector's technique of combining certain instruments achieved a new sound, "Rather than just say, 'that's a piano, that's a bass.' Now, we have what you call a piano-guitar. Which you're going to call something else. It sounds like something else. Although it may be two or three instruments combined playing the same notes, it now sounds different." Daryl Dragon notes that Brian has "said he tried to copy what Phil Spector did, but Brian had a unique approach."

Brian's use of vocals was one of the most important happening in popular music in the 1960s. When he combined those voices with his studio technique, the results were astounding. Hal Blaine thinks that "Brian started using voices in rock 'n' roll. That's what made most of us [the studio musicians] really perk up. It was a really beautiful blending. It set a trend." Mike Love was amazed that Brian "could, first of all, have in mind four different parts. It's hard enough to get one down and hold onto it while you're singing, hearing three other parts. But he'd have four and five-part chords in his mind and dish them out to all of us and then take the top which is the melody. It never ceased to blow my mind that he could know those notes and retain them."

Most of the Beach Boys' hits were recorded on three tracks; because of this, the instruments were all recorded together. Daryl Dragon notes that Brian is "master of production when everything is happening at once. I think what screwed Brian up a little was when they brought in eight-track and sixteen-track, because there's too many choices. You can't work with timbres of sound. You have to say, 'Well, I hope this works when we overdub.'

I think Brian Wilson should go back to the way they recorded when they made all the hits, back to the three tracks. Have all the musicians come in there and do it. Stay away from the sixteen tracks, stay away from the twenty-four. He's the kind of guy that when the flow is right, he gets the job done."

Brian Wilson is one of the most important composers and producers in popular music. Not because he had a lot of hits. More, because he created a kind of music that was brand new, sounds that nobody had heard before. Daryl Dragon says, "I went to high school and college and majored in music, and I have yet to take a course that had what Brian Wilson has in his head. There aren't any courses. It's like, he makes the laws. I believe the things he does will be analyzed in fifty years and that they will fit in to the music history of what's going on today. He's going to make music history someday; they're going to have to name something after him. I think he's much more inventive than the Beatles were. They never really got me like what Brian did."

Opposite, When Brian would finish a new song, the group would gather around the piano to hear it and work out their vocal parts. Brian relied on Carl for feedback: "If Carl doesn't dig it, I'll do something he and I both like. I like Carl's ear."

Because Brian is easily bored, his songs are full of unusual chord changes and tempo shifts. Brian's boredom translates into constant surprise for the listener. To create those unique sounds, Brian worked with a group of studio musicians. The regulars included: Hal Blaine; (Horns) Steve Douglas, Jay Migliori, Roy Caton, Lou Blackburn; (Guitar) Ray Pohlman, Glen Campbell, Tommy Tedesco, Jerry Cole, Barney Kessel; (bass) Carol Kaye. Lyle Ritz, Julius Wechter; (Harmonica) Tommy Morgan; (Accordion) Carl Fortina, Frank Marocco; (Piano) Leon Russell, Al De Lory, Don Randi.

Pet Sounds and "Good Vibrations," an album and a single released by the Beach Boys in 1966, established the group as the leaders of a new type of pop music, Art Rock.

First came *Pet Sounds,* an album fraught with emotional, personal, and introspective songs, an album that was a significant departure from all that had gone before and the first album by the group that was a commercial disappointment to the record company. At the same time, *Pet Sounds'* release gave rise to the belief within the "hip" artistic and critical community that Brian Wilson was a genius.

While the American public had some trouble relating to Brian's new direction, he was also experiencing resistance within the group. Mike Love has been singled out as the man who most objected to the nature of the lyrics. Murry Wilson also voiced his concern, and, in general, there was a feeling that Brian was moving too fast, was getting too experimental, was advancing ahead of his audience, and maybe even using *Pet Sounds* as a steppingstone to a solo career.

"Good Vibrations" is probably the one record most readily identified as a Beach Boys song, and it too was a battleground for Brian's artistic impulses and the commercial interests. This one last time, Brian and the public clicked.

Despite the success of this single, the Beach Boys in 1966 found themselves falling out of favor on the home front, while they were concurrently enjoying worldwide acclaim. The Beach Boys juggernaut traveled from Japan to Europe to England. Everywhere, acceptance and love of the Beach Boys and their music was at an all-time high. Everywhere except the United States.

Within the Beach Boys, there was growing turmoil. Without, they were experiencing their first drop in popularity. Despite the critical success of *Pet Sounds* and the million-selling success of "Good Vibrations," 1966 was the beginning of the end of the Beach Boys as Brian Wilson's group, and the start of the most frustrating era in Beach Boys history.

Opposite top, Brian at the studio control board. Engineering whiz Steve Desper is on Brian's right. Opposite bottom, The touring Beach Boys in Japan.

7.
PET SOUNDS

"Marilyn, I'm gonna make the greatest album, the greatest rock album ever made." That's what Brian Wilson told his wife just before he began the creation of *Pet Sounds*. In his self-imposed, escalating battle with the Beatles, Brian had shifted his focus from creating great single records to creating an entire album, partly because he was so impressed with the Beatles' *Rubber Soul* ("It was a whole album with all good stuff."). Brian felt it was time for him to make a complete statement instead of just a collection of singles and other songs composed to fill out the sides. Not that Beach Boys' records had a lot of "filler." There was just a need to go further, to create something new and exciting, an entire album experience.

Brian's creative growth had been frequently interrupted in the latter half of 1965. Already into the planning and recording of what was to become *Pet Sounds*, he had to take time out to make the *Party* album, a record that was a 180-degree turnabout from his last '65 studio production, "The Little Girl I Once Knew." As '65 ended, the Beach Boys took to the road for a major tour of Japan, and Brian was free to work on his music. Working alone, however, wasn't the solution for Brian. He was having problems articulating the thoughts in his head, and felt the need for a collaborator . . . somebody to bounce ideas off of and help him with lyrics, the one area where Brian was occasionally weak.

Tony Asher was working as a jingle writer in an advertising agency in late 1965 when he received an unexpected phone call from Brian Wilson. Asher and Brian were casual acquaintances because Asher used to hang around recording studios. "In those days," he recalls, "everybody would play their songs at the piano. For some reason, I played a couple of tunes for Brian. . . . I was thinking, 'Wouldn't it be great if he said, "Fabulous! I'll record that on my next album." . . . The point is that I did apparently demonstrate to him some ability to write. . . . I wasn't trying to say to him, 'Let's write some tunes together.' I was just trying to impress him that I was also a player and a writer.

"About a year and a half went by from the time I'd played for him, and I got a call. I must say it was a shock when somebody said, 'Brian Wilson's on the phone.' I said, 'Yeah, sure.' I thought it was somebody in the office fooling around." According to Asher, Brian said something like, "'I've got this album that's way overdue at Capitol. We were supposed to have it out months ago, and I haven't even started it. I've only done one or two tunes on it, and I hate them, and it's really driving me crazy. How would you like to write some tunes for me?' Well, that was like saying, 'How'd you like twenty-five thousand dollars?' Aside from the prestige, aside from the fact that the guy was just one of my idols . . . you could take all that away. But it was a guaranteed certain number of record sales."

Asher got a leave of absence from his job and went to work at Brian's Beverly Hills home. "I'd go over there in

the morning, and by the rime we got him out of bed and rolling, got everything going, had something to eat, farted around . . . it would be four o'clock in the afternoon before we got to the piano.'' It was the hanging around, the socializing that Tony Asher didn't like. With the exception of their creating together, Tony Asher didn't enjoy his association with Brian Wilson. Asher has expressed his dislike for Brian's taste in everything, from art ro Brian's absorption in an ever-changing array of philosophies. Brian's fascination with spiritualism, what Asher called the ''marshmallow mystics,'' was not a common ground between the two men and made Asher uncomfortable in the non-working hours. Asher was once quoted as saying that Brian was a genius musician but an amareur human being. He denied that quote but indicated that he didn't think it was too far from the trurh. The one aspect of Brian's personality that Asher couldn'r comprehend was Brian's irresponsibility toward anything except the music. As Terry Melcher once noted, ''To be that much involved in just one thing, you can't be on your guard . . . choosing not to have to be aware of certain things. He chooses not to borher.'' Or as Van Dyke Parks (Brian's next lyricist) noted in 1971, ''It's cute when he ignores someone else's needs, because he can always plead insanity.'' Tony Asher observed that Brian ''was a bit eccentric'' but his ''immaturity or irresponsibility was more like a kid who forgets his glove at school'' and there was no malice involved. Brian jusr wasn'r interested in rhe business aspects of his career by 1966, and Tony Asher remembers how hard it was to deal with Brian. ''I got calls from B.M.I. [Broadcast Music Incorporated—a firm rhat collects performance royalties for songwriters] and from attorneys and executives and all kinds of people who'd say, 'You're seeing Brian. Can you please help us? He's got this contract that he's GOT to sign . . . hundreds of thousands of dollars are involved, and we've sent him fourteen copies and hand-delivered them and had goons go up and stand around with nightsticks! We can't get him to sign, [or] he signs it and can't find it, that kind of stuff!' '' As Asher recalls, there were frequent ''pleas from people . . . 'Can you *please,* somehow, get him, it's to his advantage, all we want to do is send him some money.''

When Brian and Tony Asher first started working together, Brian played Asher ''Sloop John B'' which had already been completed. According to Asher, Brian ''had a big studio-size tape recorder in his house and a couple of monitor speakers. He said, 'That's all I've got.' Then, he played one other tune that had a lyric that he didn't like. He didn't even like the melody. It was a completed track called 'In My Childhood.' We wiped off those vocals and that melody and rewrote it. . . . The [chord] changes were the only thing that stayed the same.'' The song became ''You Still Believe in Me.'' ''The bicycle bell part—that was all kept . . . not because anybody thought it was a good idea to keep it. It was kept because it was

Top, Beach Boys without Brian. Middle, Brian in the studio. Bottom, Brian with Tony Asher. Bruce Johnston feels that Asher's main role was to punctuate Brian's thoughts.

mixed down into a track. You didn't have twenty-four tracks in those days, and you mixed some tracks that would lock in."

Beginning with *Pet Sounds*, Brian's recording methods changed considerably from his past work. Rather than going into the studio with a completed song, Brian was writing music in the manner of an impressionistic painter. Brian, according to Asher, "used to go in and record [instrumental] tracks. We didn't know what they were going to be. They didn't even have melodies. They would just be

a series of chord changes that Brian liked, with some weird or not-so-weird instruments. . . . Then, we would bring these back [to the house] and play them and kind of write a melody to them and then write some lyrics. [It was] a terrific way to write songs . . . it's a luxurious way to write. But it's great because you get a good feeling."

Next, Asher recalls, Brian would "just be banging out at the piano. He or I would sing dummy lyrics . . . whatever popped into your head. By the time you had spent two or three hours, you had kind of written the song. We didn't say, 'Wouldn't it be great to write a song called "God Only Knows."' . . . It wasn't that kind of thing.

"When we got through at the end of the day, maybe it was three or four hours working on that one song, he'd have a pretty complete melody, partial lyrics, and a kind of bridge and some other stuff. But not a complete song. I'd go home at night and work on the lyrics a little bit . . . then go back, and he might say, 'Hey, that's terrific' or 'I don't like those lines.' He did a lot of editing on them."

Like any joint creative endeavor, it's very hard to say who wrote what, but Asher feels that although "it was a little different on each tune, there's no doubt that I did much more lyrics and Brian did much more melody. On almost every tune, he certainly wrote some words. I would submit things to Brian, and he would make comments and suggested changes. When he wrote lyrics or music, it was less likely for me to make comments about what he was doing."

Pet Sounds is considered Brian's masterpiece, and it was critically acclaimed at the time even though its sales were a relative failure by Beach Boys standards. The combination of Brian's music

and Tony Asher's lyrics was an important ingredient, but it was the production that Brian has always been most proud of. "Well, I felt that the production was a masterpiece. *Pet Sounds* is an offshoot of the Phil Spector production technique. . . . My contribution was adding the harmonies, learning to incorporate harmonies and certain vocal techniques to that Spector production concept. . . . [It was a] production achievement. It was the fact that everything on that album was interesting, everything flowed."

Brian acknowledges the conceptual nature of the production, but the com-

KARL LEAF

Marshall Berle: "I saw Brian one day in '66 in a cassette duplicating place about to go to Capitol to a big meeting. The Beach Boys loved to have meetings . . . they'd fight and scream and yell. Brian had eight loop tape cassettes made. One said, 'No comment.' Another said, 'I like that idea.' So every time during the meeting it came time for him to say something, he'd just put the right tape on; he wouldn't say a word. He had seven or eight tapes that said different things."

JIM MARSHALL

EARL LEAF

mon lyrical thread was not anything more than a reflection of what was going on in Brian's mind, and it wasn't a premeditated concept. Tony Asher insists that "we never wrote a song with a certain kind of lyric because it fit into a predetermined concept for the album. I continually hear people talking about that, but I confess, I just didn't know what they were talking about." Asher's insistence is convincing, but an examination of the lyrics and the song order makes for a strong argument because if one looks, it is possible to find a story on *Pet Sounds*. It's a story about a man's search for love and acceptance. It begins with hope, "Wouldn't It Be Nice," and ends with a final loss of innocence, "Caroline, No." It's not really stretching the content of the album at all to make that point, and if it was unintentional, then it was a very happy accident.

It has been suggested that much of the record is about the marital difficulties that Brian and Marilyn were experiencing, including a much-talked-about crush that Brian once had on Marilyn's older sister Diane. As Tony Asher notes, "Caroline, No" was written about "sweet innocent little girls . . . and his

wife's sister, well you probably heard tales about that. So, writing about girls with long hair" was autobiographical. "It was evolving into a nice song, [but it became a sad one] because he was saddened to see how sweet little girls turned out to be kind of bitchy, hardened adults." Taken in that context, the record is more than just a reflection of what was on Brian's mind; it stands as a startlingly honest look at this human being.

Another especially personal song was "I Just Wasn't Made for These Times." In the lyric, Brian expresses the realization that he doesn't fit into society. Brian: "[It's] about a guy who was ctying because he thought he was too advanced, and that he'd eventually have to leave people behind. All my friends thought I was crazy to do *Pet Sounds*." In the midst of his masterpiece, Brian was already coming to an awareness that if he wanted to pursue his artistic muse, there were going to be major changes in his life. What these changes would have been won't ever be known, because Brian abandoned his art rather than break from the security of his life as it was.

From a production standpoint, a number of the songs had unusual stories connected with them. "Wouldn't It Be Nice," according to Brian, "has a very special and subtle background . . . one of the features of this record is that Dennis sings a special way, cupping his hands. I had thought for hours of the best way to achieve the sound, and Dennis dug the idea because he knew it would work." On "You Still Believe in Me," Tony Asher remembers that "the strange opening is Brian and I on the piano. One of us had to get inside the piano and pluck the strings, while the other guy had to be at the keyboard pushing the notes so that they would ring."

In a 1967 interview, Brian stated that "Let's Go Away for Awhile" was "the most satisfying piece of music I've ever made. I applied a certain set of dynamics through the arrangement and the mixing and got a full musical extension of what I'd planned during the earliest stages of the theme. I think the chord changes are very special. I used a lot of musicians on the track—twelve violins, piano, four saxes, oboe, vibes, a guitar with a coke bottle on the strings for a semi-steel guitar effect. Also, I used two basses and percussion." Brian's use of sounds was virtually unheard of for the rock world, but the resulting music was more than just a virtuoso production in the Phil Spector mold; it was emotional music. As Brian noted, "The total effect is 'Let's Go Away for Awhile,' which is something everyone in the world must have said at some time or other . . . nice thought. Most of us don't go away, but it's still a nice thought." It was a thought that must have become increasingly attractive to Brian, because only months after that interview, he went away for a long while. There is one additional noteworthy fact about "Let's Go Away for Awhile." Brian said that he intended for the released version "to be the backing track for a vocal, but I decided to leave it alone." Tony Asher adds the footnote that he did write lyrics for the song.

On each track of the album, Brian used many studio musicians to create unusual instrumental combinations that were the backdrop for the vocals. The album's title, *Pet Sounds*, had multiple meanings, from the cover photo to Brian's use of his two dogs, Banana and Louie, on the end of "Caroline, No", to Brian's contention that the music itself

EARL LEAF

Above left, Brian and Marilyn. Elton John: "That was one of the first albums by a group who were known for pop singles that really started to make people sit up and listen. The Pet Sounds *album was a turning point."*

JIM MARSHALL

was his own "pet sounds." Brian's arranging skill combined the sophisticated instrumentation with the layered vocals to construct the textured sounds that make the album so special. Whether it was his use of voices, of horns or a banjo or a theremin, the instruments became integral parts of the record. Nothing was too exotic. On "Caroline, No," the soft hollow percussion effect is Hal Blaine playing the bottom of a plastic Sparklett's water jug. The bicycle bell on "You Still Believe in Me," as Tony Asher indicated, was unintentional, but it fit. On "Here Today," you can hear Brian's voice directing the musicians. His voice too becomes an instrument. It's not sloppy recording; it's part of the music.

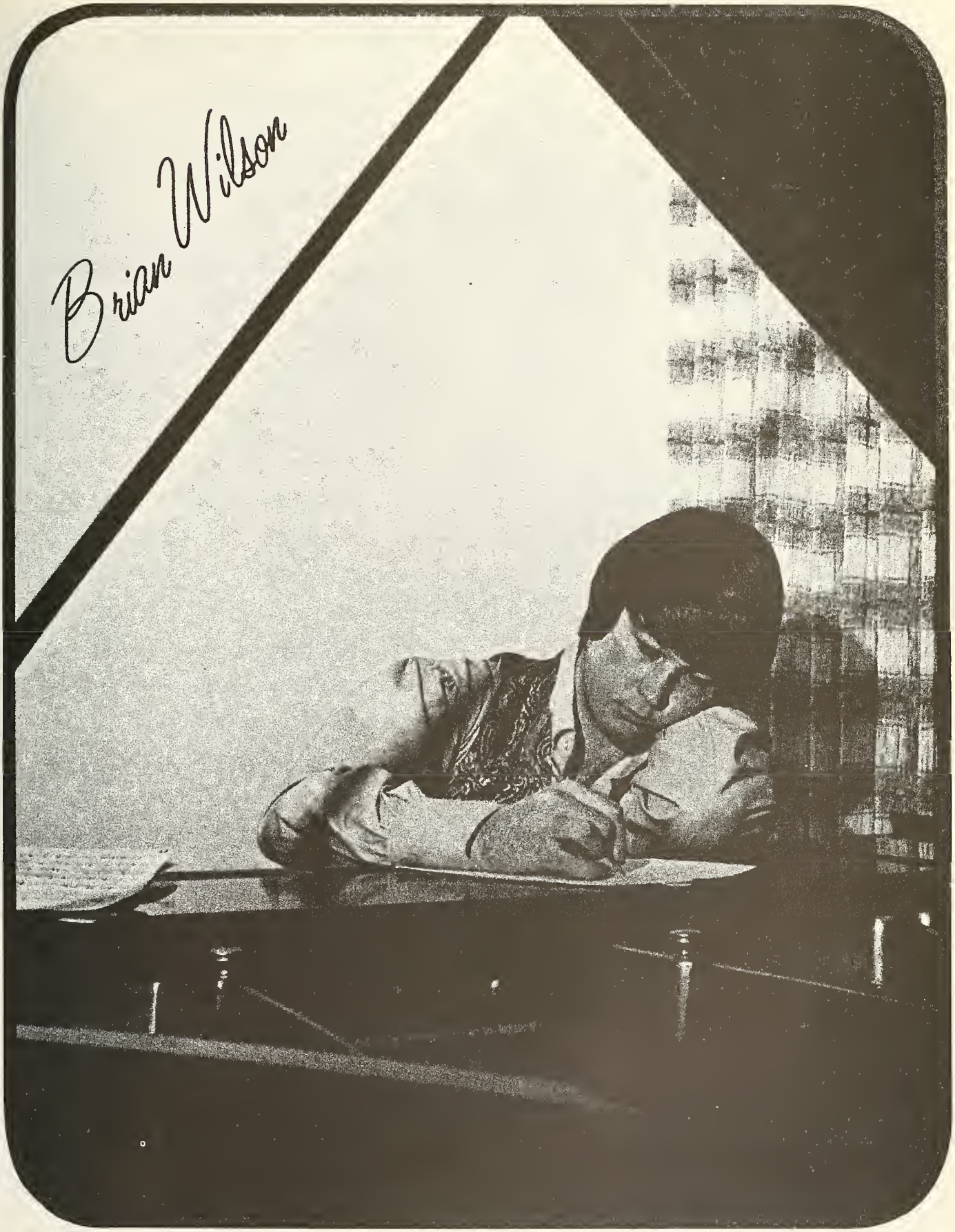
Considering the relatively unsophisticated recording equipment that was at Brian's disposal in 1966, Brian's accomplishments are even more impressive. At

any time, though, Brian's use of sound textures would make this an important album. Also, there wasn't very much overdubbing in those days, so Brian had to hear the mix in his head, and then get the musicians to play it live. *Pet Sounds* was, and remains an unparalleled achievement in popular music. It predated the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album by a full year, and that album, upon its release, was considered the ultimate in production. Both have worn well, but *Pet Sounds'* emotional content has stood up through the years while the glow of the Beatles' production advancement is now taken for granted.

Because the creative process was all-consuming in Brian Wilson's 1966 existence, Tony Asher's first-hand reminiscences are particularly interesting when they focus on Brian's business decisions. Tony Asher might not have been into drugs or spiritual pursuits, but he and

Brian did have many conversations about the record-buying public and what would and wouldn't sell. For instance, "God Only Knows" became a topic of discussion because of the word "God" in the title. Asher remembers that "from a purely commercial aspect, [Brian] said, 'You're not going to get any airplay on this song.' He had a good point . . . at the time, there was a record with the word hell or damn in it, and it was banned [from the radio]. There were songs that weren't being played, particularly in the South, because of those words. . . . We both recognized that it was a real pretty song and thought it had a good chance of being a single. . . . I had to really fight with him to retain that title." Asher thinks that Brian ultimately decided to keep "God" in the title because some people told Brian that it was "an opportunity to be really far out [because] it would cause some controversy, which he didn't mind." The album was Brian's first bid for acceptance by the hip community and a battle with the estab-

Above, In the Studio. According to one observer, Mike scornfully referred to Pet Sounds *as "Brian's ego music." That was in 1971.*


Brian Wilson

lishment would increase his credibility as a "now" artist.

Within this very serious project, there were some fun moments. There had to be, if Brian Wilson was involved, because even in his most troubled days, he loved to laugh. Brian's reputation for outrageous behavior and his noted ability for a "put-on" were partly an outgrowth of his infatuation with humor. Tony Asher describes one of the more lighthearted moments he spent with Brian: "There was an album out called *How To Speak Hip* . . . a lampooning of the language instruction albums. I played it for Brian, and it destroyed him, killed him. . . . The funny thing was, there are a lot of references to dope smoking, which must have meant virtually nothing to the public in 1957 when they put out this album. There must have been maybe twenty guys in the whole country sitting and rolling a joint and falling down laughing. . . . Brian picked up on a couple of references on the album. . . . He started saying phrases that were on the album, the way people did with Vaughn Meader or Bill Cosby. One of them, this hip character, said if everyone were 'laid back and cool, then we'd have world peace.' So Brian started going around saying, 'Hey, would somebody get me a candy bar and then we'll have world peace.'" According to Asher, Brian "even made an acetate disc with a label on it with the title. . . . He talked about calling 'Let's Go Away for Awhile,' 'And Then We'll Have World Peace.'"

The music was taking a very satisfying direction for Brian, and he awaited the return of the Beach Boys so that they could add their vocals to his new songs. Sometimes, as on "Caroline No," Brian didn't wait and did all the singing himself. It was painstaking work, but Brian could do it. He could sing all the parts. Tony Asher remembers that sometimes after a session with the guys, Brian would "completely wipe off everything they'd done and do the rest of it himself." The fact that Brian Wilson no longer needed any of the band to make "Beach Boys" records must have been a scary concept. What had been a perfect set-up—the Beach Boys tour and Brian records—was starting to show signs of strain. Afraid that their mentor might be getting ready to step out on his own, the Beach Boys were experiencing their first serious conflicts with Brian . . . conflicts that both Murry and the record company joined.

The problems with the record company were straightforward enough; they wanted more "fun" hits and Brian refused to deliver them. That battle Brian could handle. The war within his family was another, much more serious problem. Tony Asher recalls that Murry would ask him, "What's the problem with Brian and why doesn't he get along with the other guys?" At the same time, according to Loren Schwartz (a friend of Brian's), Murry was stabbing Brian in the back. "I remember Brian leaving the booth to confer in the studio with the veteran musicians who idolized him, and Murry waiting for the door to close before he would say things like, 'Brian doesn't know what he's doing—no talent. I'm his father, and I know. He can't hear a thing—deaf in one ear. I taught him everything. He'd be nobody if it weren't for me. I made him. He needs me. I'm really the great songwriter—Brian writes terrible songs.'" Schwartz added, "Poor Murry."

Some of the Beach Boys didn't like the new direction that Brian's music was taking, and they were voicing their feelings. Tony Asher remembers that Al Jardine told him that "'I really like some of the stuff; I'm not sure how people are gonna react to this album.' I think he was really trying to find a nice way to say, 'I like the tunes, but I'm not sure they're what we ought to be doing.'" Dennis reportedly didn't have anything but love for the music, and Bruce Johnston, who idolized Brian, was happy to be part of it. Brian and Carl were very close during the recording of *Pet Sounds*. Brian: "Carl and I were into prayer.

Above, An ad for the Beach Boys last L.A. concert of the sixties. Opposite, The Beach Boys helped sell "Mini-Surfers." Richard Goldstein wrote in 1966 that "the word on this album is that if Brian Wilson ever saw the perfect wave, he probably wouldn't lift an eyebrow to watch it roll by. And if that matters to you, Pet Sounds *belongs in your record rack."*

We'd pray a lot together, and we prayed for light and guidance through the album. We kind of made it a religious ceremony." In another interview, Brian noted that "Carl and I have a strong affinity for each other. He's so reasonable and practical. He keeps me in check in case I get too far out. I tend to get deep into what I'm doing, not exactly obsessed, but too intense for the people around me."

That intensity did not meet with Mike Love's approval. Mike felt that the new music "sure doesn't sound like the old stuff to me." As Brian's first lyricist, Mike had watched as a parade of people periodically replaced him as Brian's songwriting partner, and there may have been some professional jealousy on his part, particularly when the lyrics were getting more complex than the tight, teen poems he'd written. Also, there are numerous reports that Mike felt very strongly that Brian's music had become too avante-garde, and that it wouldn't sell records. Mike Love is now publicly very proud to have been involved in the creation of *Pet Sounds*, and he has belatedly recognized its artistic importance. In 1966, however, Brian's "commercial daredevilism" and progressive ideas were meeting with resistance from within the group, from Murry, and from the record company. The recording sessions of *Pet Sounds* often resembled a battlefield.

Tony Asher recalls that as a producer, Brian was "very singleminded. He knew what he wanted. . . . He was a slavedriver with the guys, but they needed it. Their tendency was to fuck around and he'd say, 'Guys, goddam it, let's do it again!' He'd scream and yell, and they'd go 'Ah—,' but they'd do it, and it ended up great." Because Brian could have done all the vocal parts himself, he had little tolerance for the foul-ups. "He knew exactly how he wanted it," Asher recalls, "and if it wasn't done that way, he'd do it until he got it that way. It wasn't because he was patient . . . he was very impatient. By just being unreasonable, [particularly] when the guys would make a mistake on only the second time they'd done something that was very difficult—he'd just go crazy." Brian, however, "was clearly in control and got strong when he had to. . . . He'd do it over and over agian . . . not patient . . . almost a fanaticism. . . . He had a patience about it coming out right," and Brian made sure that every note on the record was perfect, even if it meant hours of singing by himself.

It was the lyrics that the guys most objected to, because they were aware that the music was great. Tony Asher remembers that when they would hear certain lyrics, "Someone would say, 'Weird.' I can remember someone saying, 'Boy, they're going nuts over Tony Asher.'" Tony also recalls that Brian said to him once that "people are sure going to know that's a Tony Asher lyric" as opposed to a Brian Wilson lyric: "It was a compliment." Asher also notes that the family's dislike of the lyrics was beginning to bother Brian a lot and that he had "these nagging fears because he was aware that the music was really different." Brian was concerned that it might not be accepted, but he knew it was the right thing to do, even if he wasn't getting total support from his family.

Brian recalls that "at first, the group thought it was a little too artistic. . . . After they heard it for a while, they realized I was right, and they understood the validity of art records." Brian didn't indicate how long it took them to come to that realization (it may have taken a few years), and in the meantime, there were fights. One incident that stands out centered on a song called "Hang On To Your Ego." At least one of the guys reportedly refused to record that song, and Brian gave in and rewrote it, and it became "I Know There's an Answer." The new lyrics included the line: "I know there's an answer. . . . But I have to find it by myself."

Despite the problems with the lyrics, Brian really had been given virtually total creative freedom for this album. Tony Asher remembers that they had "five or six tunes totally finished, words and music, and the guys hadn't heard a note." There were only a few compromises in the final product, most notably the forced (and out of place) inclusion of "Sloop John B" for commercial reasons. And that song fit productionwise, even if it had nothing to do with the rest of the album lyrically.

"Sloop John B" was released in March of '66. At the same time, Brian released his first and only solo record. Steve Douglas, a session musician who was working at Capitol Records, remembers pushing Brian to make a solo record. "I was really instigating him to put it out under his own name, and he did." That record was "Caroline No," and according to Douglas, its release "caused problems, man, I just can't tell you."

The Beach Boys, who relied on Brian for all their music, were beginning to wonder if their leader was planning to desert them. Brian, in 1976, recalled the fighting during *Pet Sounds*: "I think they thought it was just for Brian Wilson only. I think the problem was that they knew that Brian Wilson was gonna be a separate entity, something that was a force of his own." Brian felt that his artistic control was part of the reason for the intra-group struggle. How did they resolve this conflict? Brian explained

that the group "figured, 'Well, sure it's a showcase for Brian Wilson, but it's still the Beach Boys.' In other words," here he flashes a cagey smile, "they gave in. They gave in to the fact that I had a little to say myself, so they let me have my stint. . . . I told them it was only a temporary rift where I had something to say, and I wanted to step out of the group a little bit, that's all. And sure enough, I was able to."

The complex political maneuvering that went on behind the scenes is hidden in the memories of the participants, and the ultimate result of their resistance to Brian's ideas is hard to measure. With the exception of "Hang on to Your Ego," Brian did express himself without any interference. *Pet Sounds*, despite the group's vocal participation, was really a Brian Wilson solo album in that the songs expressed the innermost feelings of its creator. *Pet Sounds* was the record of a singer/songwriter years before that kind of expression came into rock vogue. The exploration of his mind and emotions gave *Pet Sounds* a coherence of thought and point of view that was totally new in rock music.

Above top, The picture sleeve for Brian's only solo record. Above right, Capitol Records Vice President (of A & R) Voyle Gilmore presents the group with three gold albums. Of Voyle Gilmore it has been said that "he never listened to an entire Beach Boys album all the way through, unless it was playing while he was on the phone or something like that."

The songs on the album are a perfect insight into Brian Wilson in early 1966, and in many ways, are still appropriate today. Particularly in songs like "I Just Wasn't Made for These Times," "That's Not Me," and "Caroline No," Brian Wilson had given the world a window to his soul. It was and is a most troubling self-portrait, a portrait of a man foundering in his emotional ocean and unsure of the new course he's chosen.

The album concludes with "Caroline No," a heartbreaking song of lost innocence that Brian today thinks of as a song that "represents the sweetness, the child in me, the gentle side."

Bruce Johnston has an interesting theory as to what that song meant to Brian: "I always thought that when he wrote 'Caroline No,' he was writing it about himself. I think that Brian realized that it was going to be over soon, that special door that opened for him, where he'd do special things naturally. . . . 'Caroline No' was how he felt about himself."

Even on a song that was so obviously important to Brian, Brian and Murry clashed on the sound of Brian's vocal, and Murry, according to Bruce Johnston, took the completed record and sped up the master from the key of G to the key of A so that Brian would sound younger.

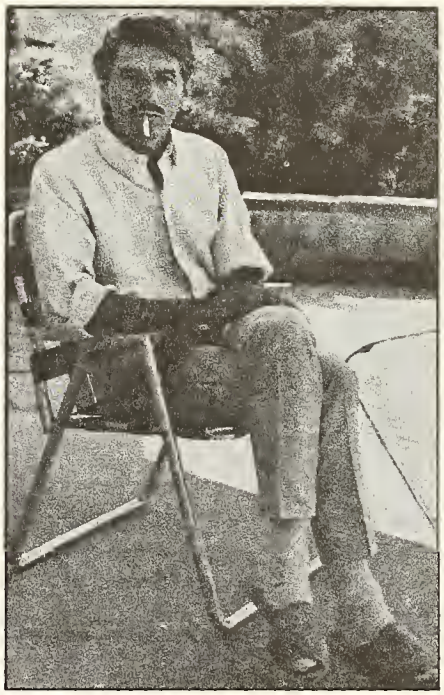
Finally, in May 1966, *Pet Sounds* was released. Everyone had his or her opinion as to why it wouldn't be commercial, and all were able to say, "I told you so," when the album was not as big a success as a typical Beach Boys album, and became the first record of new material to begin a downward spiral of sales and acceptance of the group's music. In retrospect, it is hard to comprehend the record's sales problems. It contained a top-five hit in "Sloop John B" and a double-sided top-ten hit in "Wouldn't It Be Nice"/"God Only Knows." Even "Caroline No" made it into the top 40 on the national charts. It is important to remember, though, that record-buying habits in 1966 still centered around singles. The Beach Boys did have many hits on *Pet Sounds*, but to the average listener, the album was inaccessible at first. It took many listenings for a fan finally to appreciate and absorb what Brian had accomplished. In terms of record sales, this was damaging, because the fan underground quickly passed the word to "stay away from the

new Beach Boys album, it's weird." Capitol didn't really do anything to help combat the "image" problem and rather than deal with the problems of a maturing artist, they hastily assembled a *Best of the Beach Boys* package. Instead of promoting *Pet Sounds*, Capitol concentrated their efforts on the *Best of* album, which quickly went "gold." What many critics consider to be one of the best and most important albums in rock history never was embraced by American record buyers, and it never sold enough to become a gold record.

There were many critics, like Richard Goldstein and Paul Williams, who perfectly understood and related to what Brian was saying in *Pet Sounds.* One tribute to the record comes from an unexpected source, the man who created "The Fonz," actor Henry Winkler: "In 1966, one of the great albums in rock 'n' roll history was made, *Pet Sounds*, by the Beach Boys. Ahead of its time. Even today, it holds up. I would sit there and listen to it and moan, sit on my bed encircled in a knee-high pile of paper and write poetry."

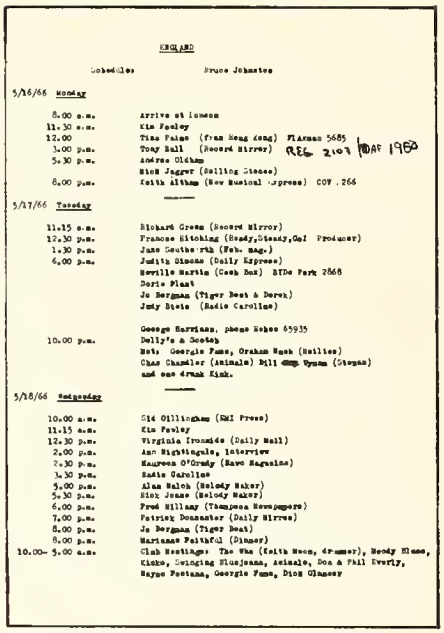
That kind of comment could be found in scattered reviews of the album in America, but over in England, it was a totally different story. Through the efforts of the unlikely trio of Bruce Johnston, publicist Derek Taylor and record producer (among many things) Kim Fowley, the album became a huge record in England and Europe and opened up a whole new audience for the Beach Boys. Without the prejudices of the American fans as to what the Beach Boys were and what kind of records they should make, the English were able to express their love of the album and were not overly concerned with the group's relative "cool."

British rock newspapers were hailing *Pet Sounds* as the most progressive pop album ever. There were a few who thought that the album was at times boring and not nearly as good as earlier Beach Boys records. For the most part, the music community agreed that it was indeed revolutionary. Andrew Oldham, the Rolling Stones' manager



(and the Beach Boys' publisher in England) felt that it was the pop equivalent of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherezade.* Eric Clapton (then with Cream) said that "all of us, Ginger [Baker], Jack [Bruce], and I consider it to be one of the greatest pop LPs to ever be released. It encompasses everything that's ever knocked me out and rolled it all into one. We're all gassed by it. Brian Wilson is, without a doubt, a pop genius."

Bruce Johnston was entertaining England's pop royalty in a hotel suite, when The Who's Keith Moon brought over the kings, John Lennon and Paul



ENGLAND

Schedule: Bruce Johnston

5/16/66 Monday

8.00 a.m.	Arrive at London
11.30 a.m.	Kim Fowley
12.00	Tina Paine (from Hong Kong) FLAxman 5685
3.00 p.m.	Tony Hall (Record Mirror) REG 2107 MAY 1966
5.30 p.m.	Andrew Oldham
	Mick Jagger (Rolling Stones)
8.00 p.m.	Keith Altham (New Musical Express) COV .266

5/17/66 Tuesday

11.15 a.m.	Richard Green (Record Mirror)
12.30 p.m.	Frances Hitching (Ready,Steady,Go! Producer)
1.30 p.m.	Jane Southworth (Fab. mag.)
6.00 p.m.	Judith Simons (Daily Express)
	Neville Martin (Cash Box) BYDe Park 2868
	Doris Plant
	Jo Bergman (Tiger Beat & Derek)
	Judy Stein (Radio Caroline)
	George Harrison, phone Ashes 65935
10.00 p.m.	Dolly's & Scotch
	Not: Georgie Fame, Graham Nash (Hollies)
	Chas Chandler (Animals) Bill [illegible] Wyman (Stones)
	and one drunk Kink.

5/18/66 Wednesday

10.00 a.m.	Sid Gillingham (EMI Press)
11.15 a.m.	Kim Fowley
12.30 p.m.	Virginia Ironside (Daily Mail)
2.00 p.m.	Ann Nightingale, Interview
2.30 p.m.	Maureen O'Grady (Rave Magazine)
3.30 p.m.	Radio Caroline
5.00 p.m.	Alan Walsh (Melody Maker)
5.30 p.m.	Nick Jones (Melody Maker)
6.00 p.m.	Fred Hillary (Thompson Newspapers)
7.00 p.m.	Patrick Doncaster (Daily Mirror)
8.00 p.m.	Jo Bergman (Tiger Beat)
8.00 p.m.	Marianne Faithful (Dinner)
10.00- 5.00 a.m.	Club Meetings: The Who (Keith Moon, drummer), Moody Blues, Kinks, Swinging Bluejeans, Animals, Don & Phil Everly, Wayne Fontana, Georgie Fame, Dick Glancey

McCartney. They listened to and were duly impressed by the LP. According to one of Kim Fowley's colorful tales, John and Paul went into an immediate songwriting huddle and emerged with "Here, There and Everywhere." Fowley exclaims, "Do you realize what that means? The two Beatles were able to gauge the whole essence of the album in one listening." That claim is somewhat overstated, although "Here, There and Everywhere" is an impressive harmony production.

The acclaim of his peers was what Brian had sought with the creation of *Pet Sounds*, but the fact that the kids didn't buy it in huge quantities, that they didn't snap it up on instinct, was more than slightly disturbing to Brian. As Audree Wilson remembers, *Pet Sounds'* rejection hurt Brian a lot because he was very proud of it. He felt that he had accomplished something good and he was very hurt." Marilyn Wilson recalls that one night, Brian came home with the finished, dubbed-down acetate disc of *Pet Sounds*. "He prepared a moment . . . we went in the bedroom . . . and he said, 'Okay, are you ready?' But he was really serious. This was his soul in there. . . . We just lay there alone all night . . . and just listened and cried. . . . It was really,

Above left, Al and Mike on tour in Houston. Above middle, Derek Taylor. Above right, Part of Bruce Johnston's British itinerary. Bottom left, backstage rehearsal.

The most progressive pop album ever? Or as sickly as peanut butter? Pop people reply

BEACH BOYS NEW U.S LP: A KNOCKOUT!

WHO'S 'BIRDMAN' pecks BEACH BOY

really heavy.

"But *Pet Sounds* was not a big hit. That really hurt him badly, he couldn't understand it. It's like, why put your heart and soul into something? I think that had a lot to do with slowing him down." David Anderle, who was just coming into Brian's life at that point, remembers that Brian "cared a lot 'cause he knew it was good. We talked about it. I thought it was a crime. He didn't take it [the sales figures] quite that seriously."

Pet Sounds was the first major musical change for the Beach Boys, as, for the first time, the music reflected a mostly adult perspective. At the same time, the Beach Boys' media image was undergoing swift and appropriate changes through the tireless efforts and skills of publicist Derek Taylor. Taylor, an Englishman who once had worked for and with the Beatles (and would again), was now located in Los Angeles and was the chief pipeline to the fan magazines like *Flip* and *Teen,* which then were the only oracles of rock happenings. He had been publicist for the Byrds and the now defunct duo of Bruce and Terry, so it only took a clever move by Beach Boy Bruce Johnston to set up a meeting for Derek with Brian.

Brian was smitten with Taylor, partly because of the Beatles association. Derek remembers: "He was fascinated by my then semi-alcoholic existence. Southern Californians don't drink a lot." Derek and the Beach Boys began an off-and-on working relationship that would last until 1968. It was Taylor who was architect of the campaign "Brian Wilson Is a Genius," and it was Taylor who helped the Beach Boys update their image. At long last, the group's marriages were made public, and they started to shed the striped shirt, short hair, surfer look. As David Anderle notes, "Derek, because of his Beatles situation, obviously had tremendous power and influence as a critic or a soothsayer or a seer of pop. . . . He really did a number with the English press, made them [the Beach Boys] accessible to the press and the critics. He did a huge amount of work for the Beach Boys. More than I think they to this day know."

With Taylor hyping Brian as a pop genius upon the release of *Pet Sounds,* the public's perception of the Beach Boys was beginning to change. One album like *Pet Sounds* doesn't make a new image, and the Beach Boys themselves hadn't significantly changed, even though their hair was beginning to creep over their ears and an occasional marijuana cigarette found its way to their lips.

It was Brian who was forging ahead, wildly experimenting with everything imaginable. With a new circle of friends attracted by the new music, Brian's mind expansion, begun with LSD, continued as he consumed different religions and philosophies such as Subud, I-Ching, astrology and numerology. As Brian said in May of 1966, "I've been through a zillion bags, more bags in the last year than you can believe. Each little adventure taught me something about myself and people and life. I've been through so many changes. And I went on pills because I was curious, not so much for kicks as for exploration. Some pills won't hurt you but stimulate your mind. Including the psychedelics." Brian felt that "it all starts with religion. . . . I believe in God—in one God, some higher being who is better than we are. But I'm not formally religious. I simply believe

in the power of the spirit and in the manifestation of this in the goodness of people. I seek out the best elements in people. People are part of my music. A lot of the songs are the results of emotional experiences, sadness and pain. Or joy, exultation and so on . . . like 'California Girls,' a hymn to youth." In 1976, Brian felt that the same song was "an example of ego—I love girls; they're so young and innocent." That is a quality that Brian no longer possesses.

Brian's songwriting, especially in 1965 and 1966, was part of a vicarious lifestyle. "I can write through understanding others. The surf songs are a simple example of that—I have never surfed, but I was able to feel it through Dennis." Personal pain was also an important source of inspiration for Brian. "I find it possible to spill melodies, beautiful melodies in moments of great despair. This is one of the wonderful things about this art form—it can draw out so much emotion, and it can channel it into notes of music in cadence. Good, emotional music is never embarrassing . . . music is genuine and healthy and the stimulation I get from molding it and from adding dynamics is like nothing else on earth." Already riding his emotional rollercoaster, Brian found salvation only in his music. His other searches, be it with drugs or religion or psychic fads, weren't nearly as successful.

Brian's artistic battles in the first half of 1966 resulted mostly in victory for his ideas, but he still had to watch as *Pet Sounds* failed to achieve the success he had hoped for. Yet, Brian wasn't disillusioned with the record business or the Beach Boys. In fact, he seemed to have reached an intellectual understanding of the group, and had come to grips with their relationship. "You learn so much about people's motives, especially when you're in a position to bring out greed and such in people. But understanding the weakness of other people helps you to see your own weaknesses as well as strength, and so it's been helpful to us all. . . . The fellows are just growing up and adjusting to the position in life which we are in. I think that being actually originally a teenage group that made that much money and success in such a short time was a little bit hard to handle for obvious reasons. It's been almost five years since we started, and it's taken just about that long to adjust and reach present maturity." Satisfied with his present artistic status, Brian looked at the future and noted that he didn't "think there'll ever be a dull moment in my career as I'm too dedicated to some kind of a scene. I don't want to be static; I must keep functioning. . . . No, I'm not a genius. I'm just a hardworking guy."

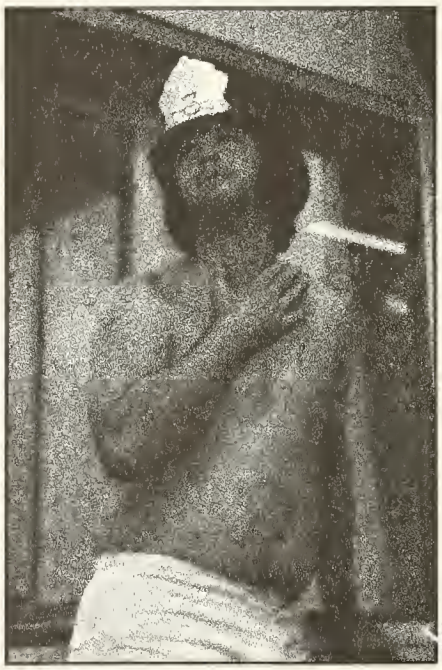
Brian's self-appraisal was quite honest, and he seemed to understand the need for growth as an artist. *Pet Sounds* was his first big step as an artist, and it had brought him the critical praise he had hoped for. Still, Brian was a troubled man. As he noted in 1976, "When 'God Only Knows' came out, Paul [McCartney] called it the greatest song ever written. If that's so, what was there left for me to do?" Brian's confidence and drive in 1966 were beginning to reflect his growing unease, and Brian's thought processes were starting to work in most unusual ways.

Brian, however, was still in the midst of a creative snowball, and even though it lasted only a short while, he had unlocked a door and had entered a room where nobody had been before or has gone since. Brian's musical searching would manifest itself on his next record, a rhythm and blues–based song with the title "Good Vibrations." Having produced the best album to that point in pop music, Brian set out to create a single that would make the world pay attention.

Above, The Beach Boys as Samurai Singers. Opposite, headlines from British rock newspapers. "Who's 'Birdman'" is Pete Townshend, who said (in 1966) that Pet Sounds *was "written for an audience sympathetic to Brian Wilson's personal problems. . . . The new material is too remote and way-out. . . . It's written for a feminine audience." Although some copies of* Pet Sounds *claim to be in stereo, the album was cut in monophonic sound, as was almost every Brian Wilson produced Beach Boys album in the 1960s. Some early albums have a stereo sound due to an engineering process Capitol used called duophonic sound. With an equalizer, they amplified different frequencies on the opposite sides to make a stereo sound. Steve Douglas: "I remember when Brian turned in* Pet Sounds. . . . *I was working as a producer at Capitol at the time. It was full of noise. You could hear him talking in the background. It was real sloppy. He had spent all this time making this album and, zip, dubbed it down in one day or something like that. I think a lot of times, some beautiful, orchestrated stuff got lost or parts got lost in his mixes."*

8.
GOOD VIBRATIONS AND SMILE

The song "Good Vibrations" had been composed during the creation of *Pet Sounds*, and Tony Asher had written a set of lyrics for the formative melody. At one point, the song was even considered for inclusion on the *Pet Sounds* album. The original lyrics didn't satisfy Brian, and he scrapped them and concentrated on the production of the record. At a cost of approximately $50,000 (and maybe more), Brian Wilson's work on what he called a "pocket symphony" stretched out over six months, ninety hours of recording tape, and eleven complete versions as he experimented with sounds and musical ideas.


JASPER DAILEY

Although there were many sessions for "Good Vibrations," engineer Chuck Britz feels that the ultimate record was "the first session we did in [Western] Studio Three, with the exception of a few bars from Gold Star and a few bars from RCA." To Britz, "That song was his whole life's performance in one song. He wanted it right. . . . Basically, it was a hit song the minute he cut it. But at that period of time, he was striving to do something that was totally different than what he'd done before." Brian accomplished that, but it took a great deal of studio time trying out various sound combinations.

In the recording of *Pet Sounds*, resistance to Brian's experimentation had cropped up for the first time, and with the continued search for sound evidenced in the number of sessions necessary to produce "Good Vibrations," Brian began to run into more resistance, as he recalled in 1976. "There was a lot of 'Oh, you can't do this, that's too modern' or 'That's going to be too long a record.' I said, 'No, it's not going to be too long a record; it's going to be just right.'" Brian didn't name the opposition, just saying that "it was people in the group, but I can't tell ya who. We just had resisting ideas. They didn't quite understand what this jumping from studio to studio was all about. And they couldn't conceive of the record as I did. I saw the record as a totality piece."

Those who heard the original track to "Good Vibrations" remember it as a very funky rhythm and blues track. In fact, Brian once intended to sell the song to Warner Brothers for use by an R & B act. Wilson Pickett's name has been mentioned over the years as being the type of singer that the song would have been perfect for. Whatever happened to that idea, the song evolved so that, as Brian put it, it "had a taste of modern, avante-garde R & B to it." In a capsule description of the production, Brian noted that within the "three minutes and thirty-five seconds . . . it had a lot of riff changes. It had a lot of movements . . . changes, changes, changes. Building harmonies here, drop this voice out, this comes in, bring the echo chamber in, do this, put the theramin here, bring the cello up a little louder here. I mean it was a real production. The biggest production of our life."

Although Brian had used the theramin before, its use on "Good Vibrations" was a first for a rock single.

Opposite, Brian at the Fire sessions, Gold Star Studios, November 28, 1966. Gold Star is the birthplace of Phil Spector's "Wall of Sound." Above a Capitol publicity photo with six Beach Boys.

Chuck Britz remembers when Brian "brought this thing in, and I went out and looked at it 'cause it had nothing but two little arcs sticking up with a vibrator going in between. And he played it for me. I couldn't believe that he would use it because it was strictly a thing that had been used years before. He was into sound, he was definitely into sounds. So we just started doing it, and it worked out beautifully. I really couldn't believe it would work like that."

The other major instrumental innovation on "Good Vibrations" was the use of cellos as a rhythm instrument, an idea that Van Dyke Parks is credited with suggesting, but it was Brian's openness to new ways that ultimately brought that sound to the record.

Brian is extremely proud of the "series of intricate harmonies and of the mood changes." Those swift changes of mood can almost be considered a reflection of Brian at that time. His up-and-down emotions were beginning to take alarming swings, and his use of drugs, particularly uppers, was concerning his family. During the period that "Good Vibrations" was coming together, Brian was beginning to hang out with a "faster" crowd, and drugs were just part of the accepted lifestyle. This new group of people had come to watch this magical music person in action, and Brian was, in turn, taking up their ways.

Pet Sounds and "Good Vibrations" were art records and their appeal to the emerging hip generation was real. Brian had been striving for the approval of the hip tastemakers, and had won many of them over with *Pet Sounds*. As word of Brian's continued musical growth and experimentation spread, all those who considered themselves "in-crowd" had to see what was going on.

For Brian, this influx of new people was both stimulating and scary. It was what Brian wanted, but it was all so new. These people were very different from the Hawthorne crowd that had always surrounded Brian, be it his brothers or cousins or his nice, mostly average, "square" friends. Tony Asher was one of the first outsiders from a different, more sophisticated upbringing. Another was Loren Schwartz, purportedly the man who turned Brian on to LSD. Loathed by Brian's family, this ever-widening circle turned Brian's head. It was both their use of drugs and the new ideas they constantly introduced into Brian's consciousness that the family didn't understand or approve of. These people exhibited an openness of thought, and Brian, who loved to talk, found an audience for his ideas. Because he was unworldly, their ideas fascinated Brian. They were also new companions for his experiments because those who

BOB KLEIN

JASPER DAILEY

Left, Chuck Britz with Brian at Western Studios. Brian: "We went to at least ten of the studios around town, but I preferred Western. . . . It seemed to have the best echo chamber for what we were doing vocally." Above, Brian.

came around most definitely rode on Brian's trip. He loved the power he had over them, and they loved the ride. Brian's education had been interrupted by the success of the Beach Boys; this new group was feeding Brian new information, and he absorbed it all with an incredible hunger. A voracious reader, Brian sought out new philosophies and religions, searching for the kernels of wisdom in each that he could adopt for his ever-changing personal philosophy. Yet this massive sensory input was ultimately too much. The contradicting thoughts were impossible to understand fully without deeper study. Brian grasped many things intuitively, but in the end, his naive wonder at the magnificence of the arts, particularly painting, gave way to a fascination with the less scientific, more spiritual, occult studies such as numerology and astrology.

Within this new circle of friends, there were two key people who, for a brief while, were at the core of Brian's new creativity. Both hopped on the bus during the making of "Good Vibrations," and both were gone by the following summer. Van Dyke Parks and David Anderle were the two men most influential in Brian's new direction. Both soared with Brian as he created music out of the cosmos. Both were broken-hearted when their association with Brian ended before their work reached fruition.

Van Dyke Parks in 1966 was a hotshot young composer / lyricist / musician who had played on a number of Beach Boys sessions. His clever if sometimes obscure lyrics would soon be married to Brian's new music and those who witnessed the emerging combination described it in words so glowing that one had the feeling that Brian and Van Dyke were reinventing pop music. When songs like "Surf's Up" were finally released to the public, those claims seemed quite valid.

David Anderle, described as "impossibly cunning," was considered to be one of the hippest people in L.A. One writer even dubbed him "The Mayor of Hipness," and Brian in '66 was very much in pursuit of hipness. As a fledgling record industry figure, Anderle was

GUY WEBSTER

JASPER DALEY

Top right, (from left to right): Michael "Spinach" Vosse, David "Carrot" Anderle, Brian "Gemini" Wilson, and Brian's cousin Barry. Bottom right, Brian with Van Dyke Parks. Chuck Britz is on Brian's right.

BRIAN WINS AWARD

Brian [illegible] Beach Boys has just become the first American winner of Denmark's 1966 **Ekstrabladet's Beat Pris**, the musical award that is given yearly to the producer of the Best Foreign Recording.

Brian, leader of the Beach Boys, received the award for his recording of "Good Vibrations," which was also the group's first million-selling single. Brian was also composer of "Vibrations."

The **Ekstrabladet** award, which is presented by (and named after) Denmark's leading newspaper, is given on the basis of a popular vote conducted by the publication throughout the country.

credited with masterminding a record/TV/movie deal at MGM that briefly lured Bob Dylan away from Columbia Records. He was, in '66, manager of Van Dyke Parks and another man who became one of Brian's closest friends, Danny Hutton. Brian and Anderle hit it off immediately. Anderle loved Brian's creative methods and his unique thought processes, and Brian liked Anderle for his reputation, for his mind, and eventually for his friendship and support. Brian saw in Anderle a link to all he wanted to achieve as an artist.

This mutual admiration society encircling Brian in mid-1966 watched with awe and respect as Brian's music entered a more experimental phase with the production of "Good Vibrations." In the approximately fifteen sessions (at four different studios) that Brian held for the song, he tried many instrumental combinations like a heavy fuzz bass, clarinets and a Spectoresque wall-of-sound section including the obligatory dense rhythms and layered percussion. As Chuck Britz explains, all these musical ventures were because Brian "wanted it better and better, . . . [but] the emotional aspects of a song can be done the first time the best you're ever going to do. . . . Let's face it, you can only do something so well." There are reports of many completed versions of "Good Vibrations" (one was even played on a radio documentary in 1976), and there's no telling how long Brian would have continued working on the song. There are numerous tales that he decided to shelve the song.

Finally, one night, it was finished. Brian recalled "the time we had it. It was at Columbia. I remember I had it right in the sack. I could just feel it when I dubbed it down, made the final mix down to mono. It was a feeling of power, it was a rush. A feeling of exaltation. Artistic beauty. It was everything. . . . I remember saying, 'Oh my God, sit back and listen to this!'"

David Anderle, who was fast becoming a major influence in Brian's life, feels that Brian just needed a little shove of confidence concerning the record. "I remember the night I heard that real well. I heard it, and I thought, that's got to get out . . . I think he just had to be told [to release it]. It's one of those things, as with so much on your own, you lose perspective. And once in a while, somebody has to come in and say, 'Hey, man, that's really good.' That's all we did with that. Say, 'That's it Brian, let's get it out.' I had a feeling that if we wouldn't have pushed him to put it out at that particular moment, it would just continue to molder somewhere."

As Brian was very much into immediacy, he and Michael Vosse (another member of the new entourage, whose father had printed one of the first books

about LSD) took the dubbed-down record to KHJ and went on to Sam Riddle's teenage rock TV dance program, "It's Boss." As Anderle recalls, "They went down, and they actually got on TV and played it. And Brian was eating carrots while it was [playing] . . . he was doing his whole vegetable thing to Sam Riddle. That was the beginning of the moment. And it was tremendous watching it on TV. And we all know what happened to 'Good Vibrations.'"

Despite initial resistance from radio programmers who were concerned that it might be both too long and too progressive, "Good Vibrations" became an instant hit, sold four hundred thousand copies in four weeks and became the Beach Boys' *first* and *only* million-selling single.

By the fall of 1966, the Beach Boys led by Brian Wilson, had musically gone past the Beatles. In October of that year, the Beatles had permanently quit touring, were working on separate projects, and *Sgt. Pepper's* was barely in the beginning stages. With "Good Vibrations" Brian surpassed everything current in popular music. "They've Found the New Sound at Last" claimed one British paper. That one song captured the emerging feelings of the almost-acid generation, and the title of the song soon became a clichéd byword.

At the same time, the Beach Boys toured to universal (outside of the United States) acclaim. It was the Beach Boys who on their English visit were greeted by screaming mobs tearing at their clothes. It was Brian Wilson in L.A. who was driving around in a Rolls Royce that had once been owned by John Lennon. To top it off, the Beach Boys (by a vote of 5,373 to the Beatles' 5,272) were named the number-one "world vocal group" in a year-end poll conducted by the *New Musical Express,* a British rock newspaper. It was all coming together rapidly for Brian.

What David Anderle calls "the beginning of the moment" was a period of creativity that burned and died with supernova brilliance. It was a time when Brian ignored all the limits and boundaries as an artist and was operating in another area of consciousness. For a brief time, he captured all of it in his music. Ultimately, whatever he saw scared him enough to retreat from all he had created. Brian may have simply gotten too close to the edge, and when he glanced over the side his sense of self-survival was strong enough that he turned and ran.

The Beatles' only real rivals come to Britain and take London Airport by surprise

VIBRATING for the Beach Boys

DENNIS AND BRIAN WILSON, MIKE LOVE, AL JARDINE AND CARL WILSON

But for a tentative, tantalizing time, he did have it.

Although many people have pointed to "Good Vibrations" as Brian's greatest achievement, in 1966 it was more of a plateau to Brian. David Anderle feels that Brian had no "sense of it being a pinnacle. I think he really had a sense of it being a beginning. I don't think Brian ever had a sense of anything being the pinnacle. Which is what I loved about him." Was Brian afraid of putting something out that he couldn't top? "No way! During that period, there was no way. And I was certainly trying to help him to think that there was no end to it. Everything was just the beginning."

For Brian Wilson, those months of feverish creation centered around an album that came to be known as *Smile.* Although *Smile* was just one part of the cascading creativity, it is the part of the period that received the most attention, showed the most promise, and caused the most heartbreak when it disintegrated. Many of the songs that were part of *Smile* have surfaced, some in edited, bastardized form. What are we missing by not having a completed and released *Smile?* According to David Anderle, "We're missing what I felt was going to be the revolutionary step in pop music. . . . Instead of getting that, you're getting pieces, you're getting hints of what it could have been. . . . It's as if a classical composer [wrote] a four-movement symphony, and he has all the music written out somewhere, he has it all recorded somewhere. But instead of the composer putting it into the logical order in which he views a symphony,

Opposite top right, Hal Blaine, Brian, and Ray Pohlman. Opposite bottom, the Beach Boys posing as native Americans. Above, London's Daily Mail *and EMI Records welcome the Beach Boys to England.*

Brian Wilson's puppets?

Do the Beach Boys rely too much on sound genius Brian?

somebody else [in this case, the Beach Boys] is coming in and grabbing certain pieces and putting them in some kind of chaotic order. That's why I say that we will never know what *Smile* was supposed to have been, because Brian had composed the music but he was still in the process of putting it together. . . . I don't want to say it was classical because I think that's pretentious. And I don't think Brian thought of it as classical at all. But it was. It was a step. And I think had *Smile* been concluded and put out, I think it would have been a major influence in pop music. I think it would have been as significant if not a bigger influence than *Sgt. Pepper* was. When *Sgt. Pepper's* came out, good, bad or indifferent, everybody started making records that sounded like *Sgt. Pepper's*. . . . Everybody said, 'Whoa, let's do this!' I mean, the concept of an album was created, I believe, with *Sgt. Pepper's*. Put it on in the beginning and it has a movement all the way to the end. And I know everybody wanted their sounds to sound like that album. That album was just startling. And I think *Smile* would have even been more startling."

Smile, never completed, never released, has become the most enigmatic project in rock history. What it was, what it could have been is left to legend and speculation. What it did become was an everlasting musical albatross for Brian Wilson as well as for the Beach Boys' career. In *Smile*, Brian was creating his own American gospel from a Southern California point of view. When his dream was shattered, so was his artistic raison d'être, and he embarked on a retreat into a battle with his own personal demons that has lasted to this day.

In examining the myths that have grown up around *Smile*, it is important to understand the atmosphere that surrounded Brian Wilson as he went about making his new music. As our chief guide, we have David Anderle, a man who was there when everything was working and watched it fall apart until he too became a victim of the collapse.

To begin with, Anderle explains that *Smile* wasn't just one album; more correctly it was an era of creativity that encompassed more than the single album project. Anderle starts "with *Pet Sounds* through 'Good Vibrations' to *Smile*. It was that period of time. Definitely, it was all part of one thing. . . . *Pet Sounds* was a break from your standard Beach Boys fare. I think it was the exercise of Brian Wilson as a major musical composer or a major musical force, not just a person who can write hit songs. *Smile* was an extension of *Pet Sounds* in the fact that it took one step even farther into the nature of exploring the musical idiom with a sense of pop." Both Anderle and Brian felt that *Smile* was as different from *Pet Sounds* as *Pet Sounds* was from *Summer Days (and Summer Nights!!)*.

"We're talking about significant steps," Anderle emphasizes. Or as Dennis Wilson put it in 1966, "It makes *Pet Sounds* stink—that's how good it is."

Top left, Melody Maker wonders about Brian's absolute control while the Beach Boys (bottom left) bask in Brian's glow.

In explaining exactly what *Smile* was, Anderle outlines all the projects that were being talked of in 1966 and notes that "this is really important. Brian was so creative at this time it was impossible to try to tie things up . . . we were talking about doing humor albums . . . there was the *Smile* talk . . . there was 'The Elements' talk." There were film ideas and TV ideas and health food ideas and entire recordings of just water sounds, all part of an atmosphere of 'anything goes.' What Anderle is pointing out is that there were many different interchangeable concepts floating around. "All the various projects that never happened that were all part of that . . . very intensely creative period of time. Every day, something was happening . . . the humor concept was separate from *Smile*, originally." To Brian, laughter was a special kind of medicine, and he wanted to incorporate a kind of shimmering joy within his music. It was Brian's feeling that humor had restorative properties for an ailing soul. In the surviving fragments of that time, *Smile* has become Brian's humor album because, according to Anderle, "That's all that's left of the whole thing. . . . *Smile* was going to be the culmination of *all* of Brian's intellectual occupations. . . . People don't know about the other projects that were total humor."

Anderle further explains that along with the humor concept, spiritualism was important, almost the flip side of the humor concept. "Brian was one of the more spiritual people I've known," Anderle wistfully remembers, "and we would spend a great deal of time looking at the sky at night 'til the morning and talking about planets . . . Brian had a real innate sense of spiritualism without the knowledgeable part that you learn by reading. . . . I would say he was deeply into spiritualism as a person. Whatever manifestation it took was whatever that was. There was numerology for a while; there was astrology for a while. Then we got into the I-Ching [an Oriental occult forecasting device]. We did that for a long time. Those were just the things. The foundation was a real, very, very deep spiritual . . . I just always felt Brian was in touch with the cosmos."

It is important to recognize this polarity in Brian's personality and realize that there was often a precarious balance between the outrageously funny and the incredibly serious. Brian loved to have fun, but he also loved to talk about life and the stars and search for some meaning in all of it. Scientific evidence in support of many of the spiritual fields is still sketchy, and it may seem that Brian was involved in areas that provided immature amusement but had no foundation in reality. Logic, however, has little to do with emotion and creativity, and it was this openness to new thoughts that made Brian a special person and a special creator.

At first Anderle's role was that of supportive friend with whom, night after night, Brian would play or compose music or discuss his musical plans and all his ideas. Those all-night sessions, aided by Desbutols (a type of upper), were very serious; there was no fooling around or any of the legendary pranks and put-ons that Brian would soon become known for. Anderle feels that Brian's put-ons rose from a feeling of "being unsure of yourself at certain times. It's much easier to do that." When Anderle and Brian were alone, there was no need for mind games, because there was an intense trust between the two men. "It was Brian and I together (alone) a lot of the time and there was never any of that put-on. I mean, we never even joked with each other. We would have very serious conversations, and we would spend an enormous amount of time just planning and talking and probing. But as soon as people started coming around, we would definitely get into games."

Brian's practicality in dealing with business problems was mostly fleeting, and Anderle was there to help Brian through the maze of business that stood in the way of Brian's emerging "pure" artistry. There was no concern, on Anderle's or Brian's part, as to whether these ideas were commercial. Anderle felt that what Brian was doing was so important that it had to find an outlet. So, urged on by Brian, Anderle began to set up a channel for Brian's overflowing creativity.

It was named Brother Records (for obvious reasons), and it was designed for all the projects that Capitol Records wouldn't want because they wouldn't sell. As Brian's music was ahead of the Beatles', in 1966, so were his business

Above, Nick Grillo (standing) and David Anderle.

ideas. The formation of Brother predates the Beatles' Apple Records by over a year.

As Anderle notes, "Brother Records was an avenue for Brian to vent his creative spleen, as it were, in directions other than the Beach Boys. Initially, we weren't really concerned with Brother being distributed through Capitol. . . . Brother was for the humor albums . . . the sound effect albums . . . making records with Jasper [Dailey]. It was for doing 'whatever you want to do, Brian. You want to make an album of water music with water sounds? You want to do an album that has no lyrics? Fine, Brian, it'll be on Brother Records.'" Brother was for the projects that were special to Brian, and Anderle remembers that "I wasn't even sure at that point that I thought the Beach Boys should be a part of Brother Records." Brother was designed as Brian's creative oasis, and in

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1966, Brian didn't consider himself a Beach Boy. Anderle insists, however, that "I was not there to break the Beach Boys up. That had nothing to do with anything in my head at all. It was not my plan to do that. As a matter of fact, I was concerned with trying to keep it together 'cause I knew if he had hassles with his brothers and cousins and so forth, it was not going to be healthy for him."

Anderle anticipated the difficulties that Brian's projects would cause with the family, and he remembers having several conversations with Brian about the group's involvement with *Smile*. "Don't have them as part of *Smile*. Do it on your own, man," Anderle argued with Brian. "Make this the Beach Boys and that Brian Wilson . . . real division . . . like a Brian Wilson album."

Smile was Brian's personal vision, and in describing the creation of the music, Anderle points out that "so much of what was going on was in his head. He doesn't share the vision that much. We were just hearing the music as an end result," at which point Van Dyke Parks began to create lyrics that would match the feel of the music without getting in the way and still remain clever and intricate.

Those end results were startling to Anderle, not only musically, but in the way Brian was composing. Like *Pet Sounds*, it wasn't straight-ahead songwriting. Anderle explains that "Brian was cutting sections of music as they were coming to him. He was going in and recording them. He wasn't doing them as 'this is this song, and this is that song.' Things were happening to him [people, feelings, new ideas], and he was recording these pieces of music" that were in part a reaction to the new experiences. Then, Brian began "putting those pieces of music together." The music evoked strong "emotion and colors and moods, movements. It had a sense of classic music without being obviously classical music. It felt extremely American to me, like Aaron Copeland or something like that. But I think it was the approach, his approach to the music" that was so innovative.

Anderle explains Brian's unique talents by noting that "during the period where the Beatles and other people were starting to use a lot of electronic effects to get certain kinds of sound, Brian was getting the same kind of effects, only he was doing it with music. He wasn't using electronic effects at all. He was just writing music in very strange patterns and ways so that he was getting organic [natural] sounds that were just like what people were getting by reverse tapes and so forth. He was just writing them. It's real hard for me to describe verbally."

One man who did capture the music in words was writer Jules Siegel. Originally commissioned by the *Saturday*

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Evening Post to write an article about Brian Wilson and his new music, Siegel became so excited by Brian's creativity that he became part of Brian's entourage. His article, turned down by the *Post* for being too positive and sincere, eventually surfaced in the first issue of *Cheetah* magazine, and it is *the* classic piece on Brian and *Smile*.

Using a variety of techniques ranging from vocal demonstration to actually playing the instruments, he taught each musician his part. A gigantic fire howled out of the massive studio speakers in a pounding crash of pictorial music that summoned up visions of roaring, windstorm flames, falling timbers, mournful sirens and sweating firemen, building into a peak and crackling off into fading embers as a single drum turned into a collapsing wall, the fire engine cellos dissolved and disappeared. "When did he write this?" asked an astonished pop music producer who wandered into the studio. "This is really fantastic! Man this is unbelievable . . . I just can't believe what I'm hearing" said the producer and fell into a stone glazed silence as the fire music began again.

According to Siegel, Brian worked on the recording of the music for over three hours, and after twenty-four takes, he was finally satisfied and invited the musicians to hear what they had just recorded: "'What do you think?' Brian asked. 'It's incredible, incredible,' whispered one of the musicians, a man in his fifties, wearing a Hawaiian shirt and iridescent trousers and pointed black Italian shoes. 'Absolutely incredible.'"

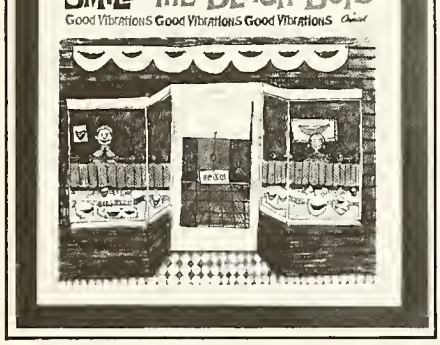
What was being put on tape, depending upon whom you listen to, ranged from "incredibly artistic" to "startling" to "revolutionary." To David Anderle, "It was just the nature of the music, the nature of the way he was writing the music plus the synthesis of his music with Van Dyke Parks's lyrics, which made it revolutionary at that time to me."

The hardest facets of the *Smile* legend to pin down are determining how close to being finished the album was and what songs were actually to be included on the record. Bruce Johnston notes that "I don't know how close it was to being finished because with Brian, you were almost overdubbing as you went to the lathe to cut the [mechanical] parts so you just don't know until it's out. I thought it was pretty close."

Although the back cover of the album (see page 100) lists twelve titles, that listing is neither definitive nor particularly meangingful because, according to Anderle, "He was always interchanging parts. 'Cause at one point, he'd say 'OK. This is "Surf's Up" or this is "Bicycle Rider" or "Vegetables."' And then a night or two later, maybe the first

Opposite top, Brian at home. Opposite bottom left, Brian at Western Studios. Opposite bottom right, Brian backstage at KHJ-TV in L.A. Above top left, Brian with Van Dyke Parks. Brian: "Van Dyke Parks is [a] music man who I think is just amazing. He got involved with me quite heavily and steered me in some good directions and turned on some light." Above bottom left and right, At Gold Star, during the fire sessions (from left to right), engineer Larry Levine, Brian, and Danny Hutton.

According to Jimmy Webb, "Good Vibrations" was an important record because it crossed over "the boundaries of the three minute record. . . . It definitely pointed the way, said, 'Hey, the drums don't have to play all the way through the record. You can have a slow part; you can have a choir part.'"



verse and chorus of what had been 'Bicycle Rider' was all of a sudden the second verse of something else. It was continually changing at that point. . . . I was always being thrown because I would hear something, and then I'd come back the next night, and he'd be shuffling around" the pieces.

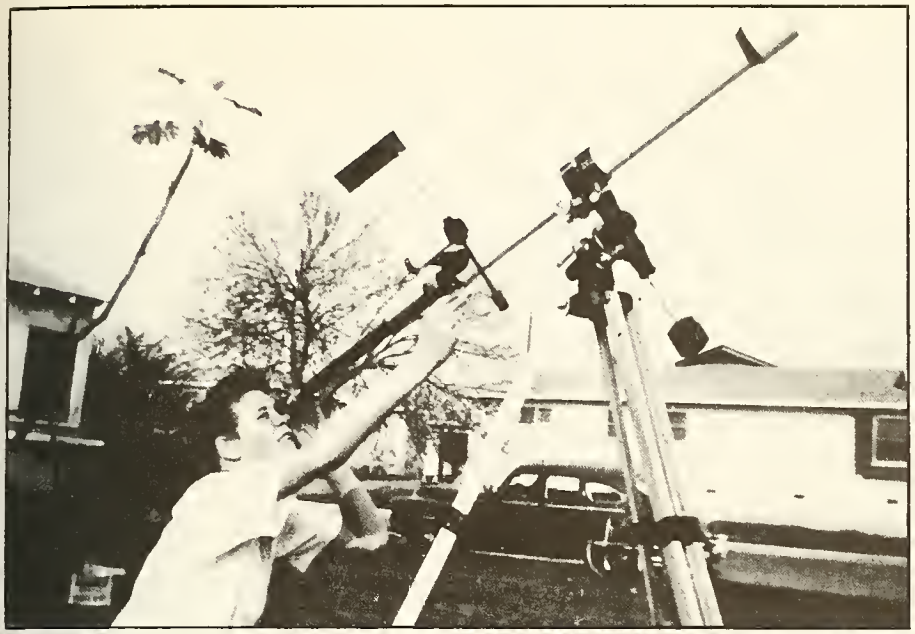
Anderle describes an incredible scene. With the lights out, Brian would sit by the turntable with acetate discs of the sections of the music. They didn't have any labels on them, but Brian could tell from the subtle differences in the grooves which disc was which piece of music. So he would sit and play them for Anderle, explaining how he saw the puzzle on that particular night. Anderle remembers saying, " 'God, Brian, why don't you leave it already? Just leave that, that's perfect that way.' And I'd get real frustrated, and then he would play . . . he'd say, 'Well, listen to this. This is going to be this, and that'll go into that . . .' And I'd say, 'Well, of course that's perfect [too].' That was the excitement of working with Brian Wilson. It was all his personal vision."

The listing of potential *Smile* songs contains over twenty names, and according to Anderle, there was enough music for as many as three albums. Some of the titles were just short segments of music that hadn't been fully developed or were going to be fit into part of another song. Anderle also explains that "a lot of those titles were at that point really just the tracks without the lyrics put on. That's why it was so easy to interchange." Had it reached the point where it was obsessive tinkering on Brian's part? "No," insists Anderle, "it was searching for the right combinations . . . it wasn't tinkering at all."

Nobody except Brian knows what pieces of music were attached to each other; the public's confusion was shared by the other Beach Boys, particularly when they would try to piece something together. The perfect example is "Cabin-essence" which was finally released on 1969's *20/20* album. Reportedly, there were twenty-five different mixes and combinations of that song all put on separate acetate discs before they put out one version. To add to the confusion, the song in its released form contains portions of "Who Ran the Iron Horse" and "The Grand Coolie Dam." Brian, who has been called the Orson Welles of rock, also at one point supposedly recorded and destroyed large quantities of

Smile *was originally known as* Dumb Angel. *Capitol printed alternate front covers (left) and the back cover (above). Eight of the listed songs have been released in some form; the listing on the back cover was not the correct playing order.*

Besides those listed that remain unreleased ("I'm In Great Shape," "The Elements," "Do You Dig Worms," and "The Old Master Painter"), other unreleased songs mentioned through the years include "Barnyard," "Indian Wisdom," "Who Ran The Iron Horse," "The Grand Coulee Dam," "You Are My Sunshine," "Holidays," and "Bicycle Rider," which became the live version of "Heroes and Villains." "The Elements" was a four-part suite of music from the earth, air, water (reportedly called "I Love To Say Dada"), and fire. "Our Prayer" was probably composed during the Smile *era as was "Can't Wait Too Long." The former was released on the 20/20 LP; the latter was written in 1967, but was not intended for inclusion on* Smile. *"Time To Get Alone," released on 20/20, was not a* Smile *song. It was originally recorded in 1967 by Redwood, Danny Hutton's group. Redwood became Three Dog Night, one of the most popular and successful groups of the past ten years.*



COURTESY OF THE BEACH BOYS

Left, Brian: "I was really freaked out on astronomy when I was a kid." Below, Brian at the fire sessions. Van Dyke Parks: "I think Brian simply asked me to collaborate with him out of instinct. It was slightly post-'Good Vibrations" . . . Brian moves quickly, and he's not judgmental and reasonable. He's instinctive. . . . He either decides pro or con people. And he decided pro for me, and I had it easy that way."

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music.

While Anderle spent his nights with Brian on a personal and musical basis, he spent his days setting up a business framework. "My whole feeling [of] what I wanted to do in relation to Brian was that I wanted him to be totally free, to just have everything come out. And I just wanted to try to keep some semblance of organization going so that things would move in a forward direction so that at some point we'd say, 'OK. This is this; this is that and this is how we handle this, so he wouldn't have to think about any of that stuff." Anderle repeated his next point to underscore its importance. "I wanted to try to keep him feeling that everything is possible, nothing is impossible. Nothing is so silly that we can't pull it off; nothing is so serious that we can't pull it off."

This juxtaposition of the serious and silly played an important part in the mythology surrounding Brian Wilson. The stories that leaked out are marvelous tales of eccentricity. For instance, Brian had a giant sandbox built around his piano and filled with sand so that he could get the feeling of being at the beach while he was writing. He put up a huge tent in one room for meetings; he turned the living room into a gymnasium when physical fitness became important. Sometimes he drove his own limousine. As David Anderle remembers, "I was there for the sandbox; I was there for the tent . . . I was there for him sending his car down to pick up the Ping-Pong table" late one night when Brian decided he needed to play Ping-Pong. And there was another desperate search when Brian wanted a telescope at three in the morning. Brian's solution was "Let's buy a telescope place, man, we'll have it open twenty-four hours a day."

All of these activities were just part of an artistic blowing off of steam. Brian would spend many hours in intense creation, and to "come down" from that, Brian would look for immediate release. Most definitely, it had to be immediate. If it didn't happen right away, for Brian, it wasn't going to happen. There were whipped-cream fights and corny dives into the swimming pool. It was adolescent stuff, and it was a very healthy, unself-conscious kind of fun. For the moment, Brian forced his friends to forget how "hip" they were supposed to be, and he got them to do what were, for the time, some pretty outrageous things. It wasn't making fun of other people; the idea was to make fun of yourself. In that respect, Brian hadn't changed at all from his high school days when he loved to be the center of attention and the butt of his own practical jokes. It was all silly and childlike, but it was freedom . . . the whole crowd doing all these things for fun, forgetting their self-image. Some nights, they would ride around the Beverly Hills Police Department in Brian's limo, smoking marijuana in the back seat of the car, but nobody could see in because the car had tinted windows.

David Anderle remembers that swimming was extremely important in Brian's life. "It started off by having meetings in the pool 'cause it was healthy. And it went from there to a couple of times we had meetings in the pool 'cause he thought the house was bugged, and he knew that there was no way to bug a swimming pool. So we'd get in the middle of the pool and whisper." Brian felt putting people in the water forced them

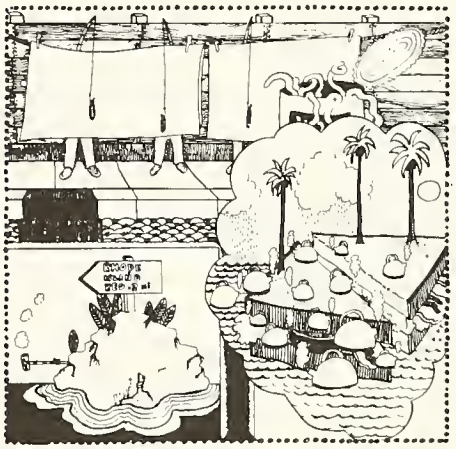
COURTESY OF CAPITOL RECORDS

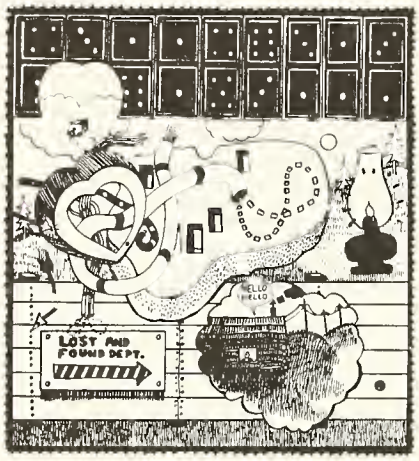
to tell the truth, and if people started bullshitting or boring him, he would just start splashing around. As Anderle remembers, "I used to hate all those things until I got into them, and then I loved them."

That's the way it was with all of Brian's creativity. His ideas didn't include only music and film; he was interested in all forms of communication. According to Anderle, Brian wanted to change radio, wanted it light and humorous and gentle and no framework. In a marathon *Smile* post-mortem conversation with writer / editor Paul Williams, which first appeared in *Crawdaddy* in early 1968, David Anderle noted that everything Brian said during this period "struck our ears as totally insane." Brian's personality was so forceful, so dominating that he could convince the whole group that he was right. "Anything he said was right, no matter how outlandish it seemed." Anderle also points out that Brian's thoughts were so unique that "he never had one idea that was simple . . . Every single idea he would say had no foundation except for his head."

Nothing was too "far-out" for Brian in '66. As Anderle remembers, "Brian got very much into chanting. Not just Hawaiian chants but chants in general. Chants were a big part of the formation of Brother Records. . . . We used to chant around the dinner table." On the B side of "Heroes and Villains," there is a chant called "You're Welcome." Anderle felt that the music released was a poor imitation of what they had been doing.

Brian was full of energy, and he loved to entertain people whether it was with chanting or his music. Mark Volman and Howard Kaylan (the core of the Turtles and now "Flo and Eddie") remember





FRANK HOLMES

going to a large dinner party at Brian's house in the fall of 1966. Everyone was seated at a long table, and at each place there was a set of headphones. When all had donned the phones, Brian proceeded to play parts of *Smile* to the astounded gathering.

Another of Brian's favorite dinnertime games was creating music with eating implements. Anderle remembers that "he would get maybe fifteen people all doing different rhythms," banging their plates with spoons. "Then he would come and sing over them . . . non-verbal things, just these chants, and they were absolutely stupendous." Whether it was with chanting or Brian's spoon musicale, "It was a daily routine," Anderle noted, "to have your mind blown by something Brian was coming up with."

David Anderle's favorite non-musical moment centered around the swimming pool. David Oppenheim, fresh from an award-winning documentary on composer Igor Stravinsky, was in Los Angeles to film a TV program about Brian Wilson's new music. One night, they were at Brian's house, and as Anderle remembers, "They just came up as a crew to do this filming. I think we filmed for a while in the living room, and they did the piano in the sandbox deal. And then Brian said, 'OK. I want you to take pictures of all of us swimming underwater.' And they all had to borrow bathing suits and get into the water and take

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pictures of us in the water. He made Oppenheim strip down and get into the pool too. It was just this one night of all these straight people in the middle of winter in a swimming pool, taking pictures of these lunatics underwater. I liked that a lot when they weren't ready for it, for getting them into the swimming pool to film."

On occasion, Brian would push too far, and even Anderle would pull back. Once Brian wanted the whole crowd to go into a bar and start a fight because he wanted to record the sounds of a real fight. That was going too far. Anderle's problem was that from his "point of view, how do you deal with somebody and you give them as much room as you can, but still hold it in check so that you can get something accomplished? That was my position, to try to see these things happen. It's one thing to be able to sit around and talk about what you want to do, and it's even another thing to maybe go in a studio or go out to a pool hall or whatever and do some crazy thing. But at some point, it's got to become an actuality, and my position was to see that become an actuality. And I had the experience of dealing with the other side of the street . . . and that's what I tried to do. I would try to let Brian have his head, but then at some point say, 'That's enough. Let's do it man, and let's get it to the people.'"

Sometimes, Anderle and Brian would clash over Brian's ideas. Like a spoiled child, Brian often made incredible demands, and as unreasonable as they seemed, Brian didn't understand the word no. He only wanted to hear yes.

"That was Brian in those days. 'Why? What do you mean, man, we can't have that? Let's do it!' And I'd spend my time going, 'Brian, the reason we can't do it is because . . .' knowing that what he wanted was correct." Brian was so absorbed in his own world that he never could have understood that there were people who didn't have the force (or the cash) to indulge their whims. Brian, Anderle recalls, "was just very active. Instead of being bored, he just wanted to move onto something new. All the time."

David Anderle paints a subjective and fascinating picture of Brian as a searching and growing artist. With the perspective of time and objectivity, all of Brian's actions can be taken in a totally different light. All of the delightful eccentricities that made Brian loved can be construed as the actions of a man in serious trouble. As Anderle admits, "He may have been going through problems, and I didn't recognize it," but he insists that Brian was only "crazy in the purest sense of the word. I thought he was as crazy as you have to be to have the visions that he had. I don't like that word, 'crazy.' . . . The kind of behavior that was going on at that time, I thought, was real healthy insanity, craziness or madness or whatever. I mean, it was fine . . . I would never cut that kind of thinking off because, for me, it takes that kind of extreme thinking to get something done. And Brian was one of the great extreme thinkers."

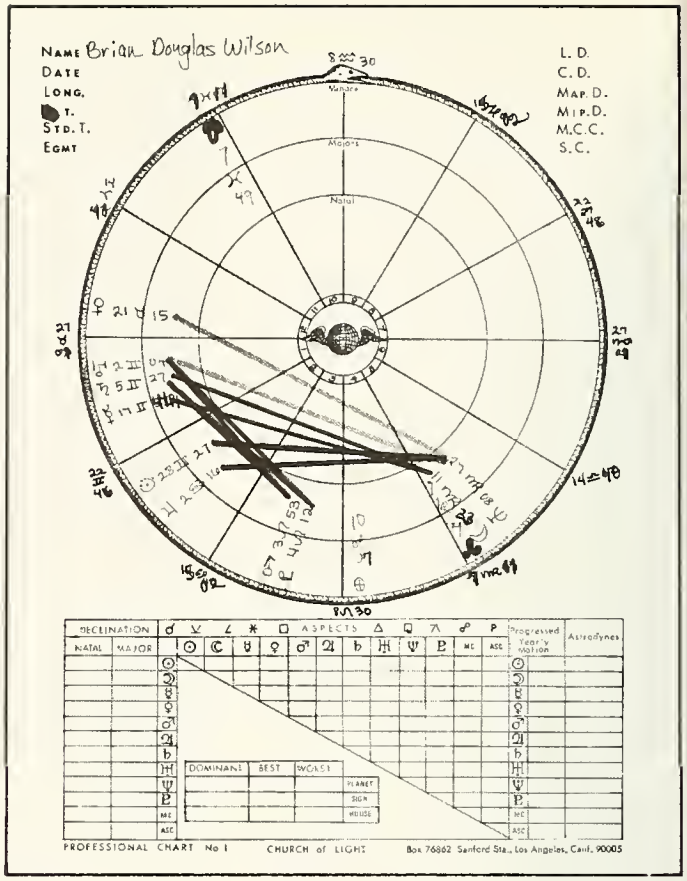
The contradictions in Brian's behavior remain confusing to this day, even to those who know him intimately and are around him constantly. Brian is renowned for the "put-on," but there were few people who really knew when Brian was being serious or seriously insane. Derek Taylor laughingly recalls how Brian "used to talk a lot of totter about health food [while he was] digging into a big, fat hamburger. And gymnasiums! I was fitter than he was, and I was only just a wet rag. Going on about vitamins. I thought maybe he was just being amusing, you see. Having a meal with him was like the Mad Hatter's tea party: 'Have some tea, there isn't any

COURTESY OF DAVID ANDERLE

Above, Brian directs the action for a movie that was to complement the new music. Opposite, Frank Holmes created the front cover art for Smile *as well as a series of drawings (seven in all) that were included in a twelve-page booklet that was to be part of the* Smile *package. The top sketch is for "Do You Like Worms"; the bottom sketch is for "Cabin Essence." Opposite below, Brian instructs drummer Jim Gordon (in fire hat) while Larry Levine looks on (from the Fire sessions). Van Dyke Parks: "I was really intent on working for him, and I didn't change the melody one note. . . . I think I had a difficult collaborative responsibility. It took a great power of inference that becomes at once melodic. You have to understand the melody and support it with words and things . . . it's a more difficult challenge than people would imagine. . . . I think that Brian's a better musician and knows how to incorporate more revolutionary aspects into recording than anybody I've ever met. That he's more curious and that there's something really sweet about what he does. I mean insouciant, something truly sweet."*

CABIN ESSENCE

Truck driving man do what you can
High-tail your load off the road
Out of night-life-it's a gas man
I don't believe I gotta grieve
In and out of luck
With a buck and a booth
Catchin' on to the truth
In the vast past, the last gasp
In the land, in the dust, trust that you must
Catch as catch can.



tea.' I could understand that, and I quite liked it. But when it got serious, when he pointed at me and said, 'You're not taking me seriously,' that's when I got nervous. Because then I realized that it was a possibility that here was real insanity." Derek feels that to Brian, he was "something of a comforter. 'Is it going to be OK, Derek?' 'Yes, it's going to be OK.' 'What?' 'What is it you're worried about?' 'You know what.' 'Let's go for a drive.' A fine madness, I must say."

Derek and Brian spent hours in conversation. As Derek notes, "In addition to being a great producer, he was also a very great talker. It put strains on my marriage because his hours were not ours. He lived like a vampire. He got up at night, and he wanted to talk. It seems later now that he was also taking rather more acid than I would suppose.

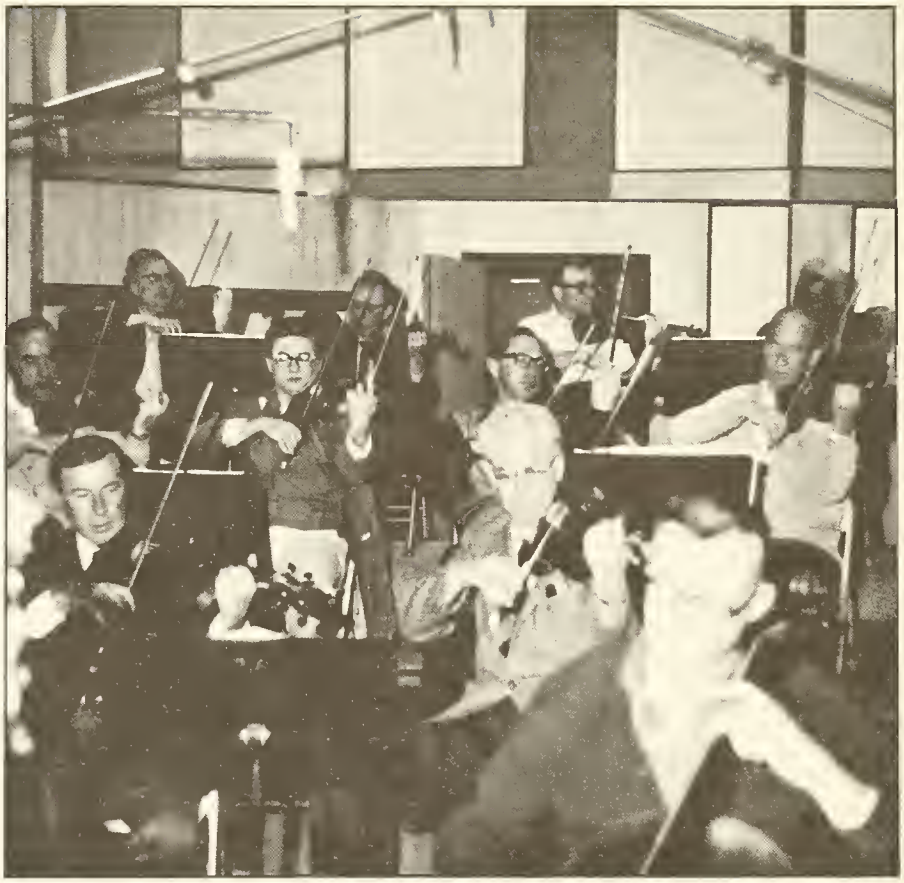
"What was difficult for me was that he wanted to know was it [*Pet Sounds*] the best album in the world? . . . I had the problem, 'Who was the fairest in the land?' Brian was always grumpy about Beatles releases if they were good." Brian wasn't mean or jealous. "He got the grumps, grouched and said, 'Yeah, well . . . I can do as well as that.' Indeed he could, but in a different way."

Above right, Brian's astrological chart. Above left, these lyrics were once part of "Cabin Essence," and were among the Van Dyke Parks words to fall victim to the Beach Boys' internal disagreements. Van Dyke Parks: "Mike Love asked me what the lyrics meant, 'Over and over, the crow cries, uncover the cornfield.' And I said, 'Quite frankly, Mike, I don't know what this means. I can't tell you.' And I split on that, went out to Palm Springs with an advance from Warner Brothers and wrote my first album." Below, Brian with writer Paul Robbins.

Brian did most everything in a different way. Acquiring a reputation as a reclusive, eccentric genius, there appeared to be a little more madness than method, but Brian wasn't really hiding from people. Derek Taylor recalls that "he wanted company. He wanted the company of the Beach Boys, . . . Marilyn, Marilyn's sisters, his mother, Arny Geller, Nick Grillo, the Beatles, most particularly Paul McCartney. Of anyone with whom he could have some sort of dialogue about music or himself or life or fitness or anything. He needed people very much indeed. It was tough keeping up with him. But when he was in good form, he was terrific." Derek adds, "One of the most awkward people I've been privileged to work with, yes."

Awkward, yes, but also lovable. And not reclusive, just shy. Not institutionally crazy, just highly imaginative. Brian was a loner who surrounded himself with people, but he was not a Howard Hughes. He thrived on verbal stimulation. The way David Anderle remembers it, "It was definitely not a reclusive thing, quite the opposite. [We didn't go out much] because we were with each other and most of the planning and organization was happening in the house. All the playing of music was in the house. There was no particular reason to be out on the street. We were enjoying each other so much. 'We' meaning Vosse and everybody. We met at Brian's house and hung out. But I always thought the going-out part was violating our being together in a way. It was bringing the external things into force."

It was the "external things" that eventually came between Brian and Anderle, Brian and Van Dyke, Brian and his music. Those external things were the record business, the Beach Boys and his family. As Terry Melcher later noted, "They really nailed him. That poor motherfucker."



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COURTESY OF DAVID ANDERLE

Right, Sid Sharp (second from left in the second row from the back) was the concertmaster for Beach Boys string sessions including those for Pet Sounds *and* Smile.

9.

HEROES, VILLAINS AND NO SMILES

From the point of view of his family, Brian was almost a benefactor rather than an artist. He wrote the hits and made the records, and the group sang them and toured and were rich and lived in the manner they had become accustomed to, all thanks to Brian Wilson.

When they saw that Brian was heading in directions that didn't always include them, they rebelled. It was this rebellion, this dissonance in Brian's life that was in part responsible for the creeping paranoia that eventually resulted in the collapse of *Smile* and all the other ambitious creative projects. Brian could handle the music. He could take on the Beatles. He could charm and thrill the media. As a creative leader, he was virtually unchallengeable. But when it came to business decisions, that's when the trouble started. Brian's new circle of friends would be banished one by one, and in the end, his family would have him again. Unfortunately for all concerned, by then, Brian had retreated from most everything, including the music.

Back in '66, though, all of Brian's dreams were becoming a reality. Anderle was forming Brother Records, and at the same time, he hired attorney Nick Grillo to institute a lawsuit against Capitol Records to force renegotiation of the Beach Boys' contract. Anderle "got the feeling they [Capitol] thought this is just another one of the Beach Boys' deals, and it'll pass over . . . if we can weather it, it'll go away. I wasn't real impressed with the deal that the Beach Boys had with Capitol Records in relationship to the success they had achieved. I felt it was time for them to get a better deal for themselves, certainly a better deal for Brian." The accounting for records' sales and royalties (centering around a disputed and outdated "breakage" clause that existed when 78-rpm records were very fragile) that Grillo and Anderle demanded became a labyrinthian task. Capitol tried to blame a fire for lost accounting records, and the suit became an interminable debacle. That suit was the first serious "bad blood" between the group and Capitol and contributed greatly to the difficulties the group would soon encounter.

While Brother was coming together, the critical praise that had followed the release of *Pet Sounds* and "Good Vibrations" was providing just the kind of acceptance that Brian was hoping for. It firmly established him as the foremost composer/producer on the music scene, surpassing even Phil Spector. There were transatlantic phone calls and an ultimate summit meeting between Paul McCartney and Brian Wilson. And when they met, the two bass players had an immediate affinity and rapport that transcended the commercial battleground and their musical common ground. Brian blew Paul's mind with his music *and* his eccentricity and that meant a lot to Brian. Paul, Brian felt, was *the* Beatle.

In his bid for acceptance by the "hip community," Brian was meeting and winning over all the "underground" press. David Anderle brought writers like

Opposite, Brian at Columbia Studios, February 24, 1967.

Jules Siegel, Paul Williams, Tom Nolan, and Richard Goldstein into the inner sanctum to watch Brian Wilson's magical creations. They were all duly amazed, and their writings were the beginning of the *Smile* story from a publicity point of view. The word was getting out: Brian Wilson was making important music.

Eventually Brian attracted the attention of the more established media, and CBS's David Oppenheim came to town to do a documentary about Brian Wilson. By the time the documentary aired in '67 it had become a program about many pop music artists because Brian's and the Beach Boys' fame had begun to wane. One segment did feature Brian, alone at the piano, singing "Surf's Up," which Leonard Bernstein described: "There is a new song, too complex to get all of first time around. It could come only out of the ferment that characterizes today's pop music scene. Brian Wilson, leader of the famous Beach Boys, and one of today's most important pop musicians, sings his own 'Surf's Up.'" After Brian performed the song, Bernstein noted that "poetic, beautiful even in its obscurity, 'Surf's Up' is one aspect of new things happening in pop music today. As such, it is a symbol of the change many of these young musicians see in our future."

"Surf's Up" was the one song above all that was the perfect synthesis of Brian and Van Dyke Parks. It was written in one night, and in the midst of all of the craziness that was going on, Van Dyke named it with perfect simplicity. With Van Dyke and Brian working well together, the team of Wilson/Parks/Anderle seemed to have all the bases covered.

Artistic creation doesn't happen in a vacuum and Brian was reaching new heights of artistry and heading in uncharted directions, spurred on by his new group. In '66, Brian had assembled a world of friends and associates that he directed with Academy Award-winning skill. Brian and his troupe were like a modern-day Robin Hood and his merry men and Marilyn Wilson was Maid Marian, keeping the hearth warm or

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Beach Boys and wives, (above), Carl and Annie Wilson; (below left), Suzanne and Mike Love. Opposite (top left): Al, D.J. "Humble" Harve Miller, and Bruce. Top right (left to right): Annie, Carol (Dennis' first wife), Dennis, and David Anderle (with head in hand). Bottom left, Annie is standing behind Carl. Annie's brother, Billy Hinsche, is standing behind the Wilson brothers' cousin, Steve Korthof. Bottom right, Chuck Britz, Carl, and Bruce. The photos were taken in January and February of 1967.

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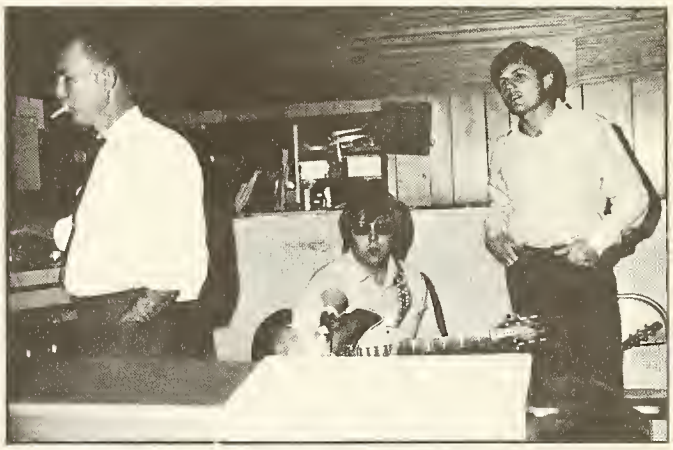
stocking the refrigerator with the mammoth quantities of sweets that Brian consumed. Despite whatever personal difficulties existed between Brian and Marilyn, during the *Smile* period she was a good artist's wife. She denied Brian little, and his whims in those days were sometimes harder to follow than a pregnant bear's.

As Brian awaited the return of the Beach Boys, he was concerned as to how the band would relate to the new people. David Anderle thinks that Brian "knew there would be resentment toward all of is just back off and go to the bedroom or whatever. I mean, he just wouldn't face up to it. I didn't think he faced up to it."

The Beach Boys, back in town from their tumultuous tour of England, were having their minds blown by all the activity. The formation of Brother Records was to give each of them a chance to exercise his creativity and let each one sign and produce artists he was interested in. There were twice weekly "chalk talks" with teams of business experts explaining how the group was going to make millions. That part was understandable. The music, however, wasn't quite what they expected, and while the group got bogged down in corporate business, they lost the creative impetus of Brian's *Smile* concept. The "moment" was beginning to slip away.

and night in month-long solid blocks for Brian's convenience.

The doubts and fights that had plagued *Pet Sounds'* creation were getting stronger both within Brian and within the group. The inaccessibility that had hurt *Pet Sounds'* sales seemed to be even more present in the new music, and the group and the record company were concerned that what Brian was doing wasn't going to be commercial. Brian knew how good the music was—he felt that he was "writing a teenage symphony to God"—but there was always the slightest seed of uncertainty that maybe he was going too far. Once the Beach Boys were back in town, they heavily "watered" that fear. As Brian found himself locked in a fearsome battle for his artistic freedom, his doubts grew. The group resisted the experimentation and resented the way Brian treated them as a musical instrument; but most of all, they didn't like Van Dyke Parks's words. It was the fighting over Parks's lyrics that eventually made Brian, who loved what Van had created, begin to question the songs.



us new guys. I think he innately knew that they were not going to dig the lyrics to some of the songs." Brian also wasn't sure that they would "be able to pull the music off the way it should have been pulled off, that they were going to resist it . . . and be very leery of us new people."

To a certain extent, the disagreements were part of a self-fulfilling prophecy. As Anderle watched, "Brian wasn't really doing that much to help get it [his new ideas] over. He really did back away from it in a style which is not uniquely his own, but one which he does well, which

As the days passed, and *Smile* wasn't completed, the pressures from all sides bore in on Brian. Capitol, who had planned *Smile* for release before Christmas '66, was unhappy with the delays. They were also concerned by reports that Brian was getting "further out" with his music and spending hundreds of hours of expensive studio time, booked day

To try and explain the Beach Boys'

resistance, David Anderle played devil's advocate: "When they came back from England, their physical reality [i.e., the great success] had nothing to do with creating something new. It has to do with being recognized for what you have done. So when they came back, the last thing they would want to do would be to become experimental. Justifiably so, from their point of view. I think that there was a certain degree of short-sightedness on their part. I'm not really sure that they really saw what Brian was doing, not totally. I mean, I know they have ears so they could hear the music.

JASPER DAILEY

JASPER DAILEY

Maybe from where they're coming from, the Van Dyke Parks influence was not a healthy influence for them lyrically. It was not Beach Boys lyrics."

Anderle told Paul Williams that there were nights when Brian would "go through a tremendous paranoia" before going to the studio "because he knew there were going to be arguments. Brian would come into the studio uptight," and when he would give out the vocal parts, there would be considerable resistance. After endless takes, Brian would just junk all the tape, and after they had left, he would go back into the studio and record all the parts himself. "All the parts," Anderle emphasized. "But it was very taxing and it was extremely painful to watch." Anderle felt that "a great wall had been put down in front of [Brian's] creativity."

David Anderle was once quoted as saying that it was Mike Love whose objections to Parks's lyrics were most vehement, and that Mike was demanding, "Don't fuck with the formula." That quote, Anderle remembers, was taken slightly out of context. In 1968, Anderle explained to Paul Williams that Mike was the one Beach Boy who opposed Brian's "experimentation stronger than anyone else. He's the one more divorced of the family relationship. . . . Mike was continually fighting Brian." Mike and Brian's studio scuffles would often end with Brian's stomping out of the studio in frustration because he couldn't control Mike and couldn't relate to Mike, and there was a lot of lost creative time. Mike's business interests were the focus of the fight; he wanted more formula hits. Anderle remembered that he and Mike got along well on a business level because Mike (of all the guys) best understood what Anderle was trying to accomplish. Artistically, it was another matter.

Brian and Van Dyke Parks had put together an incredible amount of music while the Beach Boys were in England, and when the group finally got to the studio, they didn't relate to what Brian was creating. As Anderle noted, "They were hearing things they never heard before . . . [and] you've got to remember that none of this Beatles stuff was happening then." The Beach Boys felt that Brian had created something that was not within the framework of the Beach Boys: "You're going too far now Brian, this is too experimental. I can't sing this part." There was one song that Brian wanted to sing lead on, but it had apparently been promised to Mike. Mike was doing it beautifully, but it still wasn't what Brian wanted. After wasting almost a week of studio time, Brian finally sang the vocal.

In examining the entire period, even with the passage of ten years' time, Anderle's emotions remain strong whenever he discusses *Smile*. The passion is still there, but the years have added perspective. "Sure, I was an interloper, and I'm sure they saw me as somebody who was taking Brian away from them. And somebody who was feeding the fuel to Brian's weirdness. And I stand guilty on those counts. . . . I was an interloper, and I was definitely fueling his creativity. No holds barred. No rules. 'There are no rules, Brian, you can do what you want to do. As long as the music is good, then there's no rules to what you should be able to do or not to do.' I think [what happened] is unfortunate 'cause I really liked the guys. And I really thought it could have all happened as a Beach Boys situation. I suggested to Brian at the time that a certain duality could exist. That he could still create for the Beach Boys, and then he would create his own thing on his own. Which to this day, I will fight anybody on and feel. I don't think the Beach Boys should have been involved with *Smile*. From where I came from, that was Brian's mistake."

The Beach Boys were a part of *Smile*, often unwilling and uncooperative participants, particularly in those intense and frustrating vocal recording sessions.

Above top, Brian with Hal Blaine. Above left, David Anderle with his wife Cherril. Opposite, This illustration accompanied Jules Siegel's article on Brian "(The Religious Conversion of Brian Wilson) Goodbye Surfing, Hello God!"

1

SAM KIRSON

It should also be noted that by this time, Brian didn't have much patience for mistakes or objections to the lyrics. Because so much of Brian's communicating had become nonverbal, the group was left to try and discern Brian's plans without ever getting a full explanation.

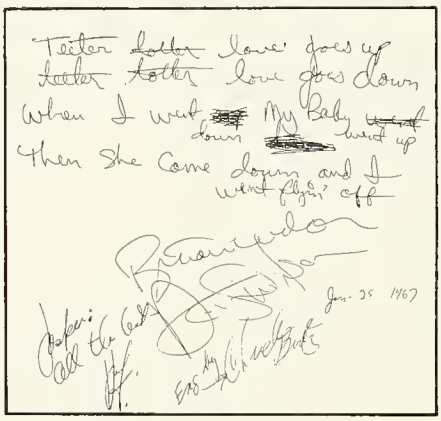
Brian could have broken up the Beach Boys very easily at that time by doing *Smile* on his own. Brian, however, put his brothers first, before the music, and it is a shame that they couldn't have understood this. The "duality" could have existed, but both camps were too uptight and paranoid for there to be any compromise that would satisfy Brian.

Depending upon which accounts you believe, the fights over the lyrics ranged from uncomfortable to brutal. Van Dyke Parks and Brian had created at a "hot" pace, but they split up, got back together and eventually split again. In February of 1967, Van Dyke was offered a solo contract by Warner Brothers Records, and he left the Beach Boys and Brian behind . . . left Brian to battle the Beach Boys on his own. It has been suggested that their parting was both tragic and predestined because both creators were very strong, and Parks resented being dominated by Brian. Anderle remembered that they "were two people who absolutely did not want to separate, but knew that they had to separate." Parks's departure only worsened the situation for Brian. With some of the lyrics incomplete, Brian now had the added, realistically impossible task of trying to write words compatible with Van's. It was when Parks left that Brian's creative spark began to wane, and rather than creating new music, he began obsessively to rearrange the pieces of the *Smile* puzzle, at this point still trying to form a coherent picture.

According to Anderle, "If he can't get it done like that [he snapped his fingers], if he can't act upon it immediately and see it happening in front of his eyes, it's not gonna work. If he has to wait until morning, it's not gonna happen. That's what happened to *Smile*." With the return of the guys from England, and their reaction to the music, Brian had lost that immediacy; he had to try to explain the music to so many people. Parks's subsequent leave-taking only became an additional obstacle. More obstacles soon arose, but there had already been one disturbing incident, one of the first indications that not everything was right in Brian's world.

One of the most famous events in

COURTESY OF JASPER DAILEY



Brian's career revolved around a piece of music known as "Fire" or "Mrs. O'Leary's Cow." The music, brilliantly described by Jules Siegel a few pages back, was to be part of "The Elements" concept that Brian was creating—Fire, Earth, Water, Air. Brian had spent a week in Big Sur to get away from the city's artificial atmosphere and really taste the surrounding nature in unspoiled form. The music that was emerging from those feelings and experiences was astounding to everyone who heard it. "Fire" was described as a "terrifying internal whine," the music wasn't pretty. Just amazing. A few days after the session for "Fire," Brian heard of a number of fires in Los Angeles. Maybe there were more fires than usual. Whatever, Brian felt that the music was the cause of the fires, and he, according to the legend, destroyed the master tapes. One tale notes that he tried to burn the tapes, but ironically, they wouldn't catch fire, so he just dumped them in the garbage. Actually, he locked the tapes in a vault. Brian told Jules Siegel, "I don't have to do a big scary fire like that. I can do a candle and it's still fire. That would have been a really bad vibration to let out on the world, that Chicago fire. The next one is going to be a candle."

Above, Jasper Dailey recorded three demos written and produced by Brian: "Crack the Whip," "When I Get Mad I Just Play My Drums," and "Teeter-Totter Love," the lyrics of which appear above. Van Dyke Parks said recently that if Smile *were finally released, "that would either expose us all as idiots or really give us a lot of ammunition. I'm ready for the gamble. It's a high roll, but I would take it if I were he. . . . I really mean that. I know it's real good. It's heavily massaged music, within the confines of that fidelity."*

As understanding as one might try to be, it would be generous to call that behavior anything less than unusual. A person rooted in a world of common sense and logic, as Jules Siegel noted, would begin to speak of neurotic or psychotic behavior. Brian in those days, however, was always spiritual. He was creating emotional, religious, spiritual music, and there was no room for everyday reality.

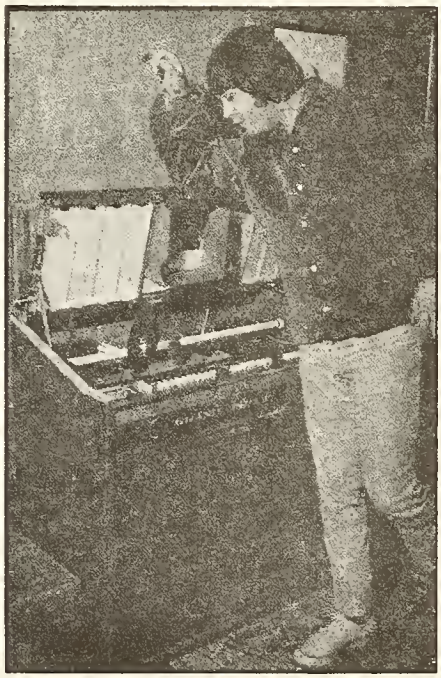
Unfortunately, it was that type of thinking in which Brian began to wallow as winter dragged on. When Parks left, Brian got out of the studio altogether and devoted his attention to the business aspects of Brother Records' formation. And there was all the media attention. Besides the CBS documentary, writers from all sorts of papers and magazines were coming by. Brian had always been shy, and all these new people and kinds of people that Brian hadn't ever met were coming around. Anderle remembered that Brian began to question Anderle as to the validity and importance of the critical community and of certain people. He was, Anderle recalled having difficulty separating "who was real and who was not real . . . because he'd not been exposed [to the media] in the past." The business, the media, the film for "Good Vibrations," the fighting with the guys all kept Brian from finishing the music. Brian, Anderle felt, "was clinging onto excuses."

Events were becoming overwhelming, and Brian was evidencing more paranoid

behavior, as this next tale illustrates. Brian went to the movies one day and returned in a fevered state, desperately seeking reassurance. He had seen *Seconds,* and upon entering the theatre, the first words from the screen he heard were, "Hello Mr. Wilson." That really upset Brian, but what followed was equally disturbing to him, and he later claimed that the movie included his entire life, his birth and his death and rebirth and even the beach. Brian felt the movie was the work of "Mind Gangsters" who had been hired by Phil Spector to upset and scare him. After his friends calmed him down, Brian repaired to his psychedelically decorated den and went over to his jukebox, which was filled with Spector and Beach Boys records. Brian punched the numbers and out jumped "Be My Baby" at top volume. Then, Brian explained to Jules Siegel why he felt that Spector was out to get him.

Spector has always been a big thing with me. . . . I heard that song three and a half years ago, and I knew that it was between him and me. I knew exactly where he was at, and now I've gone beyond him . . . he was the first one to use the studio. But I've gone beyond him now. I'm doing the spiritual sound, a white spiritual sound. Religious music. Did you hear the Beatles' album? Religious, right? That's the whole movement. That's where I'm going. It's going to scare a lot of people.

On another occasion, Brian kept a studio filled with violinists waiting for a session,



waiting to find out if the vibrations were right. They weren't, and three thousand dollars went down the drain. Besides the money, the incidents are revealing as to Brian's relative stability (or lack of it) during the *Smile* period.

In the midst of all this "unusual" behavior, there were, as always, pressures from the record company for a new single and the completed album, and from the guys not to use any of Van Dyke's lyrics. There was pressure from Murry that all of the music was just too darn weird. On top of all that, Brian was now having trouble getting studio time when he wanted it (often in the early morning hours). Also, the studio operators were hassling Brian for violating union regulations because Brian was often engineering his own sessions. Nobody but an engineer was supposed to touch the control-room board, but Brian didn't want to have to try and communicate his ideas. He wanted to implement them; in addition to all his other talents, Brian is an excellent mixer and engineer. The combined studio problems may have been why Brian built a studio in his home in mid-1967.

In the Spring of 1967, the Beatles released their conceptual production masterpiece, *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band,* a record that brought the Beatles back to their position of supreme leaders of the rock world. A number of people have speculated that the release of this album, hailed as *the* new sound, convinced Brian that it was

too late to have an impact with *Smile.* It was probably only another contributing factor. "Heroes and Villains" was released after *Sgt. Pepper,* and if Brian had decided to scrap *Smile* only because of *Pepper,* then he probably would not have released the highly progressive new single that was an integral part of *his* new sound.

As it was, the negotiations with Capitol Records had reached a crucial stage, and it was necessary for the Beach Boys to get a single out. David Anderle remembered, "I told Brian he had to have a single. It was the hardest thing I

Above top, Phil Spector (left) and bodyguard. Above, Brian at his private jukebox. Above right, The Beatles' 1967 classic.

ever did." The business was coming between Brian and Anderle's friendship, but Anderle knew that if Brian wanted Brother Records to become a reality, a single had to be released. "Heroes and Villains" was chosen because it was the closest to being completed.

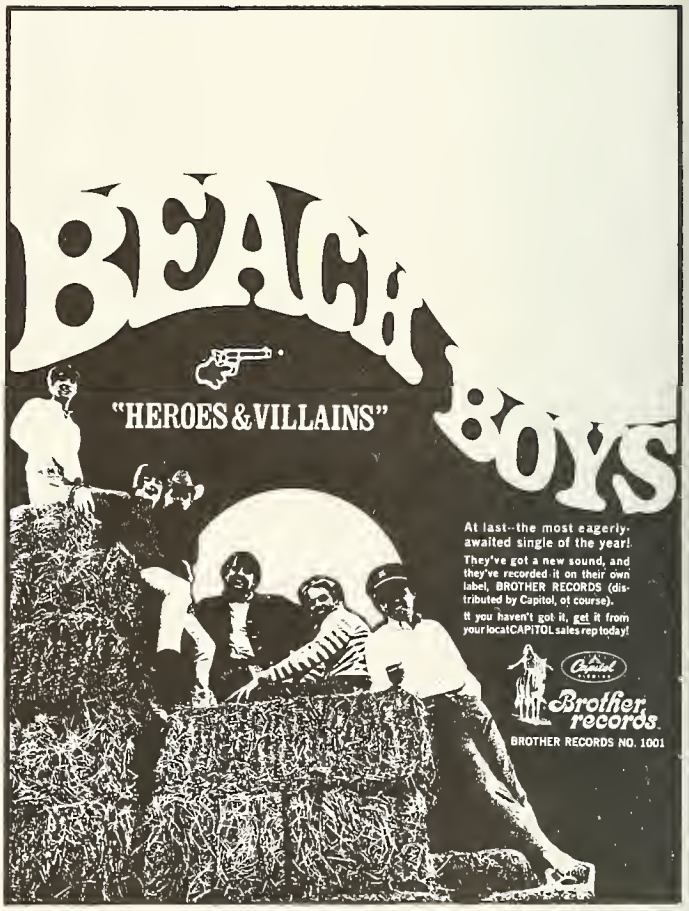
Actually, it had been finished in December, but Brian, caught up in his puzzle, continually edited the song, creating new pieces and scrapping them, until it emerged in its sharply shortened form. Chuck Britz, who engineered the original recording in late 1966, noted that "it was done like 'Good Vibrations'; it was just one hell of a song. It was a great song. Then I understand, they went up to his home [studio], and they did a lot of things. They cut it and inserted an organ down at the bottom of the [swimming] pool to get the pool quality [all the water was out]. They did all kinds of things, but I think basically it could have been as good a classic as 'Good Vibrations' or better. . . . Our [version] ran about five or six minutes . . . it was just a further step from 'Good Vibrations.' It had some great melodic lines . . . the arrangement was so full, and it was just something that I was very disappointed in when I heard the final product."

The death of Smile *was reported by Derek Taylor in the May 2, 1967 issue of Disc and Music Echo magazine: "In truth, every beautifully designed, finely-wrought, inspirationally-welded piece of music made these last months by Brian . . . has been SCRAPPED. Not destroyed, but scrapped. For what Wilson seals in a can and destroys is scrapped." One of Brian's friends recalls that Brian had become "like a petulant child. 'It's my ball and we'll play by my rules or we won't play at all.'"*

According to various accounts, there are many longer versions of "Heroes and Villains," some reportedly as long as twelve minutes. All those who heard the original are of the opinion that the released version is missing, as Jules Siegel wrote, "entire sequences of extraordinary power and beauty . . . sacrifices to the same strange combination of superstitious fear and God-like conviction of his own power he [Brian] displayed when he destroyed 'Fire.'" What was released is still an incredible piece of harmonic and lyrical wizardry.

At this time, there were significant changes in Brian's life. Anderle left because it was impossible to run the business without decisions from Brian, and as Anderle remembered, "We couldn't find where his head was at for a whole long period of time." Anderle was gone, shut out of Brian's life in a heartbreaking finale when Brian refused to leave his room while Anderle pleaded with Brian to come out and see him. Reflecting on their creative relationship and friendship, Anderle explained that all the new people and the writers and the demands were very difficult for Brian because "he is a very shy person. Not a

DAVID ANDERLE



real social person. Brian was bombarded with newness. And he was on his own. The guys were not around when this was happening. He definitely was handling it all by himself. When something like this happens, you have to start trusting people. You either trust someone around you or trust no one. You either become paranoid or you can trust people. I think for a long period of time, Brian trusted a lot of us. Then it went from that to, from what I could tell, paranoia. Where he didn't even trust us anymore."

What remained of Brian's trust resided in uncommon, occult places. Numerology may have caused an irreparable rift in Brian and David Anderle's friendship. Inspired by Brian's boundless creative energy, David painted a picture of Brian. When Brian saw it, as writer Tom Nolan commented, "the whole room went on an acid trip." Brian then went over to the picture and began to count the objects in it, and Brian was freaked, as was David, by the coincidences of numerological significance in the painting. Brian partly felt that Anderle's portrait had captured his (Brian's) soul. Anderle may have crossed an inviolable line in Brian's mind, a mind that was becoming increasingly confused.

Astrology dictated the release date of "Heroes and Villains." Brian was waiting for the astrologically correct moment to let the world hear his new record. Terry Melcher colorfully recounted the scene (in Nolan's '71 *Rolling Stone* article). A string of Rolls-Royce limousines went to KHJ radio to give them a worldwide exclusive premiere of the next Beach Boys single. Brian prepared the moment carefully, presented the acetate disc to the D.J. who turned to Brian and said, according to Melcher, " 'Can't play anything that's not on the playlist.'

"Heroes and Villains" was one of the most highly publicized single records in rock history. Because it was the follow-up to "Good Vibrations," expectations were high. Restless anticipation increased to such a peak that the record's actual release could only seem anticlimactic. Below, Brian with Michael Vosse. Left, The picture sleeve for "Heroes and Villains" and the Brother Records logo. Opposite bottom left, David Anderle's painting.

JASPER DAILEY

Brian almost fainted. . . . It really killed him." Even when the program director finally straightened things out, it was too late. The spell was broken, and the damage to Brian had been done.

The Beach Boys' time, too, seemed to have passed. It had only taken a matter of months, but the delay in following up "Good Vibrations" with something of equal impact had damaged their commercial momentum. With the release of *Sgt. Pepper* and the arrival of San Francisco psychedelia and the "Summer of Love," the Beach Boys had become incredibly passé. They had one final chance to create a bridge with the new "hippie" audience, and they may have sealed their own doom when they failed to play at the Monterey Pop Festival, which was the predecessor of Woodstock.

With Brian on the festival's Board of Directors, the Beach Boys were slated to appear on Saturday, June 17. It was Brian who eventually decided that the group wouldn't perform. Among the "official" reasons given for the cancellation was that the group needed to finish "Heroes and Villains" because of the crucial status of the record company negotiations; that reason wasn't too "hip." The other excuse was that Carl, who had been indicted for refusing to join the army, was so upset that he wouldn't be able to sing.

Through the years, a number of additional explanations have surfaced. One is that the group was initially supposed to be paid for the concert, but when it became a non-profit event, their fee was withdrawn and they felt they were being "ripped off" and used to make money for someone else. Mike Love offered another explanation, remembering "a meeting in the back yard, and I don't know what was happening, but I guess we were wrecks. Brian was really shattered by some really bad trips. He'd been taking acid and some uppers and smok-

ing some hash and was out of control. Dennis was in some weird place [he was getting divorced from his first wife Carol] . . ."

John Phillips of Mamas and Papas fame, one of the festival's organizers, felt that "Brian was afraid the hippies from San Francisco would think the Beach Boys were square and boo them." It is possible that the Beach Boys, in their short hair and striped shirts, would have only been subjected to ridicule at the festival. The music? It's hard to believe that the audience wouldn't have been moved by the music. It hadn't failed before, and it might not have at Monterey. But that, as they say, became academic when the group pulled out.

Probably it was just one of Brian's capricious career moves, which were so much a part of that wildly illogical summer of 1967. Before pulling out of Monterey Brian had finally decided to shelve *Smile,* to relegate it to the land of limbo. What brought about the final decision, nobody but Brian will ever know, but it seems that it was forced upon him by incredible negative pressure. It was Brian who chose not to release *Smile,* but that choice was hardly a free one. All around him, people were saying NO!

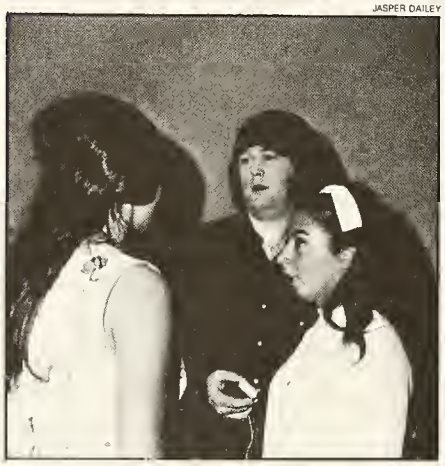
Bruce Johnston now feels that the fights over *Smile* were "like a slap in the face to Brian. You have all these coat-and-tie people up at Capitol saying, 'Hey, Brian, you're breaking the mold of something you did really well.' He's a guy who did things [made hits and great records] very well, and he wants people to trust his judgment. And here you have people saying, 'No.' He's a very fragile person, he's a special person, and he didn't understand that kind of 'no'" particularly when he had produced so much success. Bruce feels the no came "a little bit from Murry and a little bit from the record company."

It has always been publicly unthinkable for the Beach Boys to acknowledge that their resistance was partly responsible for Brian's freakout and the ultimate destruction of *Smile*. They blamed it on the new people he was hanging out with, like Van Dyke Parks and David Anderle and the others, and the drugs they were all feeding Brian. Through the years, the group has always had to answer the question, "What happened to *Smile*?" Their answer, which became the official line of the Beach Boys family, was that Brian, in Mike Love's words, "freaked out completely in the last stages of *Smile* and stepped back and said 'I can't handle that production race thing that was going on between the Beach Boys and the Beatles.' . . . Subliminally, it was a contention thing, and Brian just stepped back, and the production war collapsed, and we did a very light album. It was his withdrawal, a reflection of his withdrawal, and our withdrawal from that confronting thing on a production level . . . our music was one bass note in 'Vegetables,' and that's how psychedelic it was, but it sure was in a freaky way. . . . Brian was so out of it, though. He was taking acid and uppers."

Opposite, the Beach Boys. Below, Brian and Marilyn.

COURTESY OF DAVID ANDERLE

JASPER DAILEY



There has never been a public (or private?) acknowledgment that the Beach Boys have felt the least bit guilty for fighting with Brian over the new music. The drugs are the scapegoat for Brian's retreat, but what forced him to take drugs? David Anderle is convinced that "the music was definitely so focused that I would have to say that drugs had nothing to do with anything . . . the drugs may have had something to do with his searching . . . I don't know. I never thought of drugs in terms of the music with Brian, *ever.* I would never think of taking LSD with Brian."

Anderle's drug experiences with Brian were confined to "soft" drugs. Brian had taken acid before meeting Anderle, and Brian's use of LSD reportedly didn't increase until *Smile* was unraveling. If Brian sought refuge within drugs, in reaction to all the pressure, then everybody must share the blame—the record company, the family, the Beach Boys, and Brian's entourage. Brian was spurred on by what Bruce Johnston called Brian's "vertical, temporary friends dropping all sorts of drugs on him. 'Try this, smoke this, eat this, take this, burn this.' You had that happening, and then everyone else saying, 'Yes. No. Maybe.' I think it got very confusing for him."

David Anderle had eliminated the rules for Brian as long as "the music is good" and that type of thinking may have provided Brian with the impetus to search for his outer limits. The family's and Anderle's love of Brian and his music could not, and did not, include a personal vigilance. There was no way to tell Brian to slow down; he's always been too powerful for that.

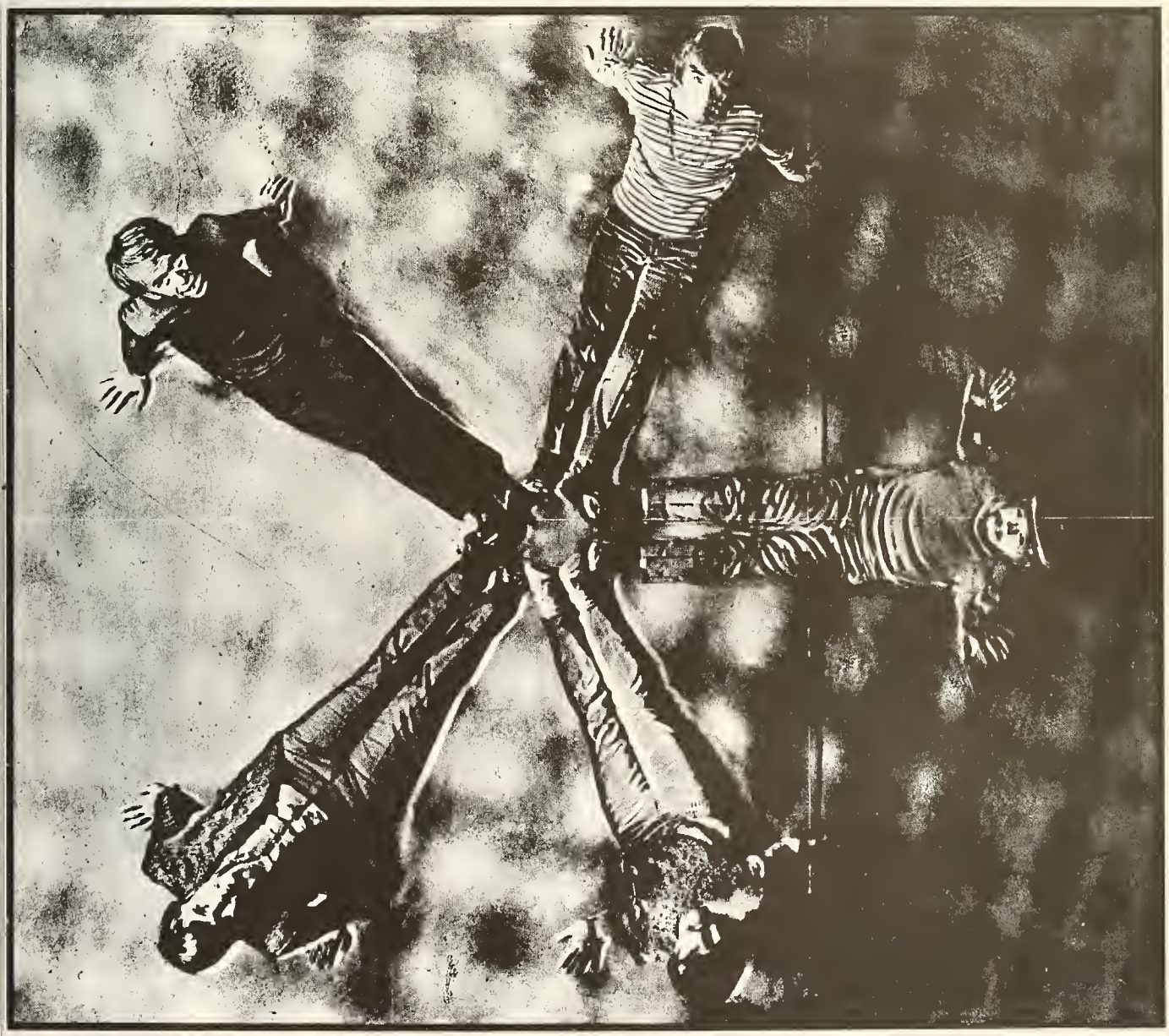
In looking at that period in retrospect, Brian seemed to be heading in one direction—self-destruction. Brian did survive the *Smile* era, and even if he may have been an "acid casualty," his very existence is a triumph of personal survival. Brian was one of the first rock stars to "burn out," and he could very easily have destroyed himself completely as so many others did, like Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Brian Jones, and Jim Morrison. Those people, tragically, did not come out on the other side of their personal hells.

Fortunately, Brian did pull back just in time, and as he explained in 1976, he had to destroy *Smile* because "it was destroying me."

In determining the ultimate cause of

Smile's demise, it is possible to speculate endlessly. The feeling remains that Brian, at one point, could have forced the issue and insisted that *Smile* be released. That act might have destroyed the Beach Boys and splintered the Wilson family. David Anderle feels that the support that Brian didn't get from the family and, ultimately, from his new friends forced Brian to kill *Smile*. Anderle explained to Paul Williams that all the "No's" were a big shock for Brian. "It's like taking a person, exposing him to something he's always wanted to be in, taking him right to the brink of it and leaving. And saying 'Geez, Brian, how come you haven't followed up with that whole thing? Why have you fallen down?' He zoomed right up there, alienated from a lot of things that had been his strengths in the past. Those strengths were ripped away, shown to be shallow and phony, [and they were now] taken away from him . . . but no [new] foundation put under him. And the foundation that we all had, that we were trying to supply him with, was us! And when we went, there was nothing left there. Just him, hanging . . . perhaps, we should have never gone in the first place." Without the exposure to the new people, Brian would never have reached some of the extremities of *Smile*, but Anderle realized that unless the whole group was prepared perpetually to support Brian, then they might have been wrong in showing him this new world. Still, Anderle believes that the music would have transcended all those difficulties if Brian had made a break from the Beach Boys and demanded his artistic freedom. Yes, he could have forced *Smile*'s release, but it might have cost him what was left of his precarious hold on reality, and in that respect, it is much better to have Brian than to have *Smile*.

Whatever turned this creator into a paranoid pop star is what killed *Smile*, and those causes are complex and still unresolved to this day. In the end, it was Brian's decision not to release it. Because his decision-making process had become bizarre and illogical, he cannot in any way be blamed for his choice. Brian knew then and knows today how important that music was both to his art and to the world of music. He's aware of its power. The buck stops with the artist, and in this case, Brian Wilson decided to



pass, *but* he backed down from his artistic impulses to save himself. There can be no art without responsibility to an audience. Art without responsibility is self-indulgence. In the case of *Smile,* Brian had to choose between himself and a responsibility to others. His decision was very human, understandable, and necessary.

David Anderle, who watched it all come together and fall apart, remembers that he "had the feeling that at one point, Brian just wanted to back away from the whole thing and forget about it. It was just too much for him. The formation of Brother Records . . . all of a sudden, attorneys were around. He was having to make major decisions. He had the group on another hand, everybody wanting him not to experiment. Then he had people like me who was pressing him to continue to experiment and 'fuck the rules, Brian. This is more important than what you've already accomplished.' I felt that what he was doing was too important to have his mind messed up with the other thing.

"I also thought, by the way, when I first met him, started hanging out with him, I thought he had the capacity to handle a full range of activities. Apparently, I was wrong. He didn't have the ability. All the things we talked about, I came to realize he couldn't pull off. . . . But that's OK, 'cause I could have helped him."

Once Anderle and the others were gone from the scene, Brian was a lone (and often paranoid) warrior fighting for his music. The battle was more than he could handle, especially when he realized that he wouldn't be allowed to create away from the Beach Boys as Brian Wilson, solo artist. What Brian couldn't comprehend then (and it is as true in 1978) is why the family wouldn't allow him the freedom to create apart from them. It is clear that they were scared; all they'd ever been was Beach Boys—straight from high school to rock stars. While their insistence that Brian remain a Beach Boy is understandable, it was not then nor is it now excusable. The man is an artist who has something to say on his own. As Anderle claims, "I just felt it could survive next to each other. I thought it could. I didn't understand why nobody else could see how easy it would be. But again, maybe from their point of view, they just saw all of us as people who were in there to get what we could get. I think that came from the father [Murry]. People coming into the

Beach Boy Defies Draft

Would Rather Go To Jail

Carl Wilson of the Beach Boys has decided to risk jail rather than report for induction into the Army.

Under a federal indictment charging him with violation of the Selective Service Act, Wilson plans to fight the case through the courts as a conscientious objector.

He faces the same charges as Heavyweight Champion Cassius Clay, although Clay has not yet been formally indicted.

Wilson was ordered to report for induction in Los Angeles on January 3. Like Clay, he refused to step forward to be sworn in.

He was indicted by a federal grand jury in Los Angeles on April 3 and later surrendered to the FBI in New York, where he was allowed to post bond.

Surprise

Carl's decision to fight the draft apparently came as a surprise to most of his friends—and perhaps even to his family.

The singer's father, Murray Wilson, cut short a European trip and returned home immediately after learning of his son's arrest.

"He never mentioned it to me," one close friend told *The BEAT*. "I don't ever remember hearing him even talk about being drafted, or how he felt about the draft in general."

Appearing before a Federal Judge in Los Angeles, Carl Wilson pleaded innocent to draft evasion charges.

He received permission to join the Beach Boys in England for a previously scheduled European tour. However, he was ordered to return June 20 for a trial on the charges.

Permission to travel abroad for the tour was granted only after he posted a $25,000 bond.

U.S. District Judge A. Andrew Hauk also ordered the singer to report periodically by telephone to Howard Smith, general attorney for the Beach Boys.

At the hearing, Attorney J.B. Tietz solemnly told the court his client "objects to all wars."

Although the arraignment will be June 2, Carl will probably remain free for a long time, even if he should ultimately lose the case.

A source in the U.S. Attorney's office privately estimated that he could remain free on bond for "at least a couple of years" if the attorneys use every legal recourse available.

Carl is scheduled for arraignment in Los Angeles on June 2. He faces a possible $10,000 fine and five years in jail if convicted.

Lawyer Optimistic

But his lawyer is optimistic about Carl's chances of winning the case, possibly on appeal. When asked if Wilson will go to jail rather than submit to induction, Tietz replied, "Oh yes, sure. But I don't think he'll have to."

CARL WILSON WILL GO TO JAIL RATHER THAN SERVE IN THE ARMY

Then

situation to get what they could get. And probably, to some extent, that was true. But it wasn't in mine, and I just resented being thought of as anybody else 'cause I knew I was different. I knew my motivations were good motivations for all of them."

What is inexplicable is that Anderle,

Carl was indicted for refusing induction into the army. He was granted status as a religious conscientious objector. The case dragged on for five years before it was decided that a proper form of alternative service would be for the Beach Boys to play free concerts at hospitals, orphanages and prisons. Above, Judy and Arny Geller. Geller helped design the cover art for the Beach Boys' Wild Honey *and* Friends *LPs.*

One observer noted that Geller and Steve Korthof were among Brian's closest companions in the late '60s.

who was putting together the record company, never got a chance to explain his vision to the group. "We had meetings," he recalls. "They had as many meetings as any band I've ever seen in my life. But these meetings were always so strange." Despite prodding from Anderle that Brian create apart from the group, Brian at one point made it very clear that all the ideas had to include his brothers and that he would not break up the group. Anderle often wondered if the family ties were really strong, but he came to realize that the Wilsons "really do have a strong bond . . . it's a strange family, but it is a family indeed. When it came down to it, they're Beach Boys. That is their thing. Which is what I came to learn; above and beyond everything else, that is their thing. Dennis's [1977] solo album is a much more critical move than people think. That's amazing that he actually did it. It is significant because it's something that Brian couldn't even do. The baby of the family came through. . . . It's really what I thought *Smile* should have been. Just a separate album. Dennis is still a Beach Boy. Brian could still have been a Beach Boy. 'Just do *Smile*, man!'" Ironically, ten years after *Smile* almost destroyed Brian and the Beach Boys, Dennis Wilson's solo record was a key factor in their temporary breakup in the late summer of 1977.

The legend that has become *Smile* is a mystery that to this day has never been satisfactorily explained. One of the hopes that has intrigued Beach Boys fans for years is that the group might one day complete and release *Smile*. After the Capitol lawsuit was settled in '71, the

group began to claim publicly that *Smile* would be forthcoming. They said that all the tapes that had supposedly been lost or destroyed actually existed and that *Smile* would be released. Reportedly, the group did piece together a still-unreleased album that included "The Elements" and many of the original musical segments grouped under the overall subtitle of "Heroes and Villains." *Smile* never did surface, though, and there is a distinct possibility that the '71-'72 promises were designed to stall the record company's demands for a new album. It was also a clever extension of the *Smile* myth, which garnered the group a lot of publicity.

What actually remains to be released is a mystery. One current member of the group's staff thinks that it's all "a big story and that all of the things have been released, and all of the things that weren't worth releasing are in the can but no one would want to hear them anyway." Through carelessness, a lot of the master tapes have been lost. Others were allegedly erased or put in a storage vault by Brian. A lot of the music does still exist, and a number of the participants have acetates of still-unreleased *Smile*-era Beach Boys music.

Bruce Johnston, however, claims that "most of *Smile* is available now." While it is true that many of the songs that were intended for *Smile* have been released (particularly on *Smile*'s replacement, *Smiley Smile*), the original instrumental tracks, lyrics, and vocals to those songs (e.g. "Wind Chimes," "Wonderful," and some of the missing segments of "Heroes and Villians") have never come out.

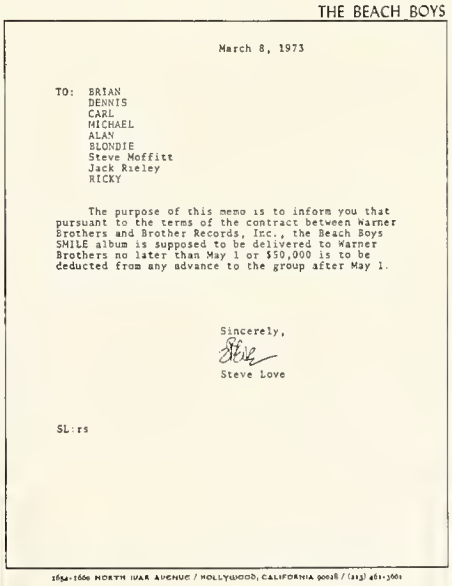
Rock writer, Beach Boys observer, and now record company executive Ben Edmonds feels that the "main thing to consider is that it may have been great for its time. Once you remove a period piece from its place in history, a lot of times it just doesn't make sense. Chances are, if there was a brilliance to *Smile*, it was a conceptual brilliance that Brian never could get the mechanics right on. 'Cause I'm sure that his ideas at that point in time were mind-blowing. But I'm sure that between the drugs and the hassle with the group, he found it very difficult to translate those brilliant concepts into brilliant music." Still, it would be fascinating to hear and analyze the music for ourselves so that we might know how great the loss of *Smile* was. Taken together, the songs intended for *Smile* that have been released constitute a mind-boggling collection, and surpass everything else the group has released with the possible exception of *Pet Sounds*. Of course, it can never be completed as Brian intended, so a compromise solution might be to release the surviving tapes and outtakes in a series of records called *The Smile Sessions*. Like Elvis's *Sun Sessions*, it would be an invaluable opportunity to analyze Brian's working methods during the time of his life that is always considered his most creative.

Of course, the possibility exists that the release of any of that music (if any does exist) would be ultimately disappointing, which may be why it hasn't been released. Bruce Johnston feels that a modern-day release of *Smile* "wouldn't be a good idea. Sometimes, when you talk about something, you're kind of let down. Say you discover the tapes and you say, 'Oh yeah?' It's been talked about so much. . . . It would live up to your expectations if you were Zubin Mehta analyzing a young composer's work. It's the kind of music you almost need a Ford Foundation grant to make. It was really a clever album, [but its release today] would [only] be important for Brian artistically. If you put that album all together, there would be an incredible artistic value . . . but for keeping a band alive, no." Bruce also thinks its release in 1967 "probably would have hurt our careers in terms of working and supporting ourselves. . . . I think the *Smile* album would have done worse than *Smiley Smile*. It was really good, but it was a little esoteric. There's a little [commercial] bridge you can cross," and Bruce thinks that *Smile* would have been that bridge for the Beach Boys. "I think it was better to squeeze it out rather than put it on one album, which we were going to do. Sometimes, I don't think people are ready for something that heavy, but now, when you look back at what's happened in the ten or eleven years since *Smile*, it's not as heavy; it's kind of a prototype of the idea that people can experiment more, even though it was never one album." And it probably never will be. *Smile* is a vibration that will remain locked away, at Brian Wilson's insistence.

Brian was a kind of guinea pig for the record industry in his fight for artistic freedom. His biggest mistake was coming along just a few years too soon. He was always ahead of most of the rock world in his creative thinking, but he was virtually consumed by the battle by the summer of 1967. Brian's timing was tragic because that summer was the turning point for the record industry. By the fall of 1967, the artist had finally become important, and it was the artist who was beginning to call all the shots. Brian missed that creatively free period by only a few months, but that miss is what created the *Smile* myth.

David Anderle has always felt that it was a great loss that Brian has never shared the beauty and the power of the *Smile*-era music with the world. He has the final word on *Smile:* "I think it's just a crime. As a person who enjoys listening to music, I think it's a real tragedy. I think it's a tragedy that it was bastardized by the guys. That music should not have been Beach Boys music. And I'll always feel that way. I think that not because I don't think the Beach Boys pulled it off or whatever. But I think it was just such a personal vision of Brian's that I don't think anyone should have been allowed to mess with it. And I felt that way when it was happening. I remember Brian told me he wanted the guys to sing on it. I thought it was a mistake, not 'cause they couldn't, but why should they? It was very personal. It was created all by him. But so be it. But I think it's a giant hole that will never be covered in Brian's musicality."

The Beach Boys never submitted Smile *to Warner Brothers nor does it appear to exist in one complete tape that could be released.*



THE BEACH BOYS

March 8, 1973

TO: BRIAN
DENNIS
CARL
MICHAEL
ALAN
BLONDIE
Steve Moffitt
Jack Rieley
RICKY

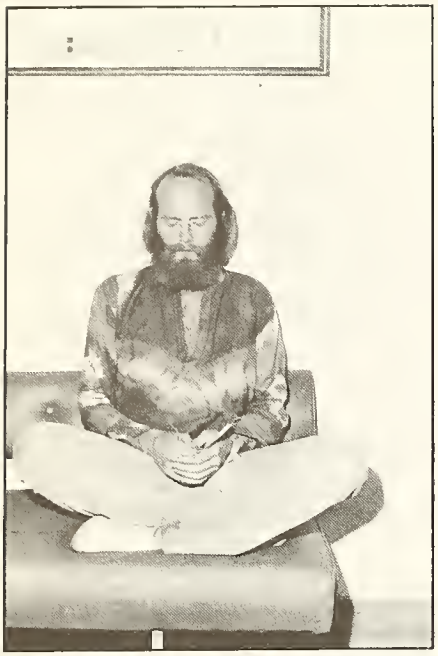
The purpose of this memo is to inform you that pursuant to the terms of the contract between Warner Brothers and Brother Records, Inc., the Beach Boys SMILE album is supposed to be delivered to Warner Brothers no later than May 1 or $50,000 is to be deducted from any advance to the group after May 1.

Sincerely,

Steve Love

SL:rs

1654-1660 NORTH IVAR AVENUE / HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA 90028 / (213) 461-3661



ROBERT ELLIS

"You'll never hear surf music again." That oft-quoted lyrical observation was made by Jimi Hendrix, one of the legendary stars to come out of the Monterey Pop Festival.

The group's non-appearance at Monterey, combined with the release of *Smiley Smile* (*Smile*'s replacement) pretty much ended the group's importance within the rock world. *Smiley Smile* was greeted with great disdain by an audience that had been hearing promises of *Smile* for over a year. It was their first record that was treated with little respect by the critics as well as by a baffled public, who stayed away from the album in droves. "Heroes and Villains" was a successful single, but not big enough to turn the tide. Everybody had fought Brian's progressive experiments, but this latest artistic about-face just didn't make it, particularly compared with *Sgt. Pepper's.* It is only in retrospect that this record has been given its due and recognized for being a great "head" album. At the time, it was considered strange, and, for the most part, it was dismissed by the critics.

Brian Wilson, meanwhile, mostly watched as his old group fell out of favor with the public. The Beach Boys would again have hits, they would again play for cheering audiences. The late 1960s and early 1970s, however, was not their time. Those were the lean years . . . years of creative inertia, financial chaos and personal difficulties. The Beach Boys, unfortunately, had become dinosaurs.

ROBERT ELLIS

Opposite top, Mike Love meditating at Southend Airport near London. Opposite bottom, The Beach Boys on tour in England in 1968. From left to right: Steve Desper, Al Jardine, and Carl Wilson. Behind Carl is soul singer Joe Hicks and Mark Lindsay of Paul Revere and the Raiders. Both were opening acts for the Beach Boys. Above, The Beach Boys, in their new stage outfits.

10.
BEACHED

By the end of 1967, although it may now be hard to understand, the Beach Boys were no longer important to the music world. With Brian Wilson at the group's helm, their records had been among the most innovative in popular music. With Brian in retreat, it took the group but a few months to go from the heights of "Good Vibrations" to a banishment imposed by the new rulers of the rock kingdom.

BOB JENKINS

The summer of 1967 was the media event billed as "The Summer of Love," the official coronation of the psychedelic era. San Francisco was the home of the new music, as the rest of the world tripped over itself trying to catch up. If that meant psychedelia was now a marketable commodity, that was okay with San Francisco's hippie "merchants." They didn't mind selling instant, tie-dyed hipness to a new generation which was just beginning to flex its economic muscle for the first time.

The San Francisco scene and the Monterey Pop Festival were the combined birthplace for a new set of musical leaders. The Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead were San Francisco's hometown bands, but Monterey was a showcase for the world's talent. Out of the festival burst Hendrix and Janis Joplin and The Who. The Mamas and Papas' singing of "California Dreamin'" seemed to more than make up for the absence of the Beach Boys' "California Girls." All of those acts and countless others gained a new and wider audience just by being part of the festival. By not appearing, the Beach Boys missed a perfect opportunity to make their peace with the San Francisco consciousness. Instead, they alienated the hip audience that had just begun to accept them because of music like *Pet Sounds* and "Good Vibrations." By not appearing, the Beach Boys quickly found themselves in exile as pop relics.

Ben Edmonds has been a longtime observer of the Beach Boys' career, and he explains why the Beach Boys were so scorned in their home state. "When everything got very much 'hipper than thou,' people, to a certain extent, found the Beach Boys embarrassing. Because the Beach Boys definitely were not hip. People out here, I think, saw them as being the antithesis of everything that was hip. And just viewed them as like the retarded member of the family that you lock away in the attic and don't tell people about." Bruce Johnston, who was part of that clean image, thinks that a lot of it was just a generation "growing up and throwing away a lot of traditional kind of behavior; it was like 'Leave it to Beaver' or something. It was just too straight. It was the kind of music where maybe the parents had said years before, 'Now, the Beach Boys, that's nice music. Why don't you look like them?'"

As Bruce Johnston once noted, "People look at the Beach Boys, and think we're surfing Doris Days."

Rolling Stone magazine began publishing in the late fall of 1967 and quickly became the arbiter of hip for the emerging acid generation. *Stone* was "underground"

press in those days, and because playing or listening to music was a main pastime of the "hippies," *Rolling Stone* concentrated on the doings in the rock music world.

What this meant was that when *Rolling Stone* put down the Beach Boys, a lot of people picked up on that and spread the word that it was no longer cool to like the Beach Boys. That stigma lasted a long time, and it was the product of comments like these excerpts from a December '67 article by *Rolling Stone*'s founder and editor, Jann Wenner. "In person, the Beach Boys are a totally disappointing group. (At the last minute, presumably afraid of a sophisticated audience, they pulled out of the Monterey Pop Festival.) . . . Brian Wilson actually is an excellent writer and composer and a superb producer, however his genius is essentially a promotional

shuck. . . . The Beach Boys are just one prominent example of a group that has gotten hung up in trying to catch the Beatles. It is a pointless pursuit. A lot of people talked about it, but the Beatles have so far been the only group to come up with a fully orchestrated and interiorly cohesive symphonic or operatic piece." Wenner, of course, was ignoring *Pet Sounds*. For reasons unknown, he dismissed their entire body of work with the next sentence. "Their surfing work continued for about ten albums with little apparent progress. 'Sloop John B' was stupid but transitional. John Lennon

Opposite, Brian in front of his Bel-Air home, 1970. Above, in Hawaii, August 25 and 26, 1967, the Beach Boys recorded a live album, Lei'd in Hawaii. *For this LP, Brian made a rare live appearance (above middle).*

COURTESY OF ED ROACH

said he really dug 'God Only Knows' [it was Paul] and the world perked up." Wenner's insight into Brian Wilson's growth as an artist appeared to be minimal. There was no way anybody could have really listened to *Surfin' Safari* and then *Pet Sounds* (besides all the intermediate steps) and not seen growth. Hip prejudice had gotten in the way of legitimate criticism, and this is one prominent reason the Beach Boys' career began to wane in late 1967. People weren't bothering to listen; it was cool to just put the group and Brian down. If there were any hang-ups involved, it was on the part of the hip generation. A new set of prejudices gained favor, one that centered around the length of your hair, the clothes you wear, and the chemicals you ingest. The ultimate irony is that underneath the Beach Boys' surface image were some very bizzare people who were often into the latest thing before it became the latest thing.

The Beach Boys, though, didn't exactly help heal the communications breakdown. Their stage outfits were still pretty silly even though they finally abandoned the striped shirts. Unfortunately, they replaced the shirts with suits that were only a small step in updating their onstage appearance. The Beach Boys were clinging to the old image out of a sense of security, and their hesitation in changing cost them a generation of popularity. By the time the Beach Boys realized this in early '68 it was too late. Time had passed them by.

Brian Wilson, meanwhile, was moving physically but not musically. The Wilsons had moved from Beverly Hills to a beautiful Spanish-style home in Bel-Air that had once been owned by Edgar Rice Burroughs. According to Terry Melcher, when Brian first moved in, he painted the house a bright purple. "The neighborhood went crazy. He lives on Bellagio in the heart of Bel-Air. There was a Bel-Air residents Citizen's Committee and they were up in arms. It was funny. It was a shitty color, I'll have to admit. You wouldn't want to live in it."

Brian and the Beach Boys recorded *Smiley Smile* in Brian's gigantic home studio. Although that album was the beginning of a long decline in popularity, at least they had put out an album. For a while the Beach Boys had ceased to exist.

Amid all the weirdness and drugs, there didn't really seem to be a functioning band. In August of 1967, Brian and the group went to Hawaii, where they filmed and recorded a concert for a possible live album. They were all wasted on one drug or another (Bruce didn't go on this trip; it had become too bizarre for him).

Next came a great deal of hashish, which influenced the making of *Smiley Smile*. To begin with, *Smiley Smile* was and is a very peculiar album. Some of the songs that had been written for the *Smile* album were used on this album, but the instrumental tracks that Brian had spent months recording had been replaced mostly by Brian at his Baldwin organ. Many of Van Dyke Parks's original lyrics were replaced with some Mike Love verbiage, and Brian and Mike hastily assembled a few songs that were pale reflections of Brian's musical experimentations. These bastardized versions are still a lot of fun, evidence of Brian's composing skills, but they are ultimately disappointing in light of the promise *Smile* once held. This album was, as Carl Wilson put it, "a bunt instead of a grand slam." One writer called *Smiley Smile* "do-it-yourself acid casualty doo-

wop." Actually, it was an artistic cop-out and disaster. After months of resisting Brian's experimenting, the group produced this lollipop of psychedelic simplicity. At the time, the album was totally incomprehensible to the public. After almost a year of *Smile* hype, *Smiley Smile* was more than a mere disappointment. It was a broken promise. Brian Wilson was going to expand the boundaries of popular music. Instead he had quit, given up, just when the new horizon was almost behind him.

Nineteen sixty-seven was a bleak year in general for the Beach Boys. They had always relied on Brian for creative direction, and in the process of fighting his leadership, the Beach Boys had become a rudderless democracy. *Smiley Smile* was a hastily assembled, minimally produced effort that took less than a month of recording. The Beach Boys were often so stoned that they sang the vocals lying down on the floor. The album credit read, "Produced by the Beach Boys,"

and with the exception of "Heroes and Villains" and "Good Vibrations," none of the other songs were elaborate Brian Wilson productions. Brian didn't even want "Good Vibrations" on the album; Capitol Records dictated its inclusion.

Smiley Smile contains some great Brian Wilson songs (e.g. "Wonderful," and "Wind Chimes"), but in comparison to *Pet Sounds* and the two previous singles, this record didn't seem to be much more than a half-hearted effort. It was as much "product" as it was "art," and back in '67, it didn't succeed on either level. Only after years of listening has this record become "art"; it has finally been embraced by the fans and understood by the critics. Brian and the Beach Boys had advanced "ahead" of their audience, but they were going in the wrong direction for all but a very small intense cult. With the passage of time, it became OK to admit that it was a good record. It was just disillusioning to those who were enrolled in the "Brian Wilson Is a Genius" school of thought. And that disillusionment translated into poor record sales, a trend that wouldn't be reversed for a long, long time.

In the fan magazines of the time, there were numerous stories that the group might be breaking up. Carl was under indictment for refusing to be inducted into the armed services, Brian was in outer space, and Dennis was going through one personal crisis after another. If they had broken up at the time, Brian might have been able to regain the creative momentum that had been slowed down when he was forced to remain solely within the group situation. However, the Beach Boys did remain together. In fact, *Smiley Smile* had been such a disaster that, in one respect, it brought the Beach Boys closer. When these guys were hit in their collective wallets, it was a message that wasn't missed.

Within two months of the release of *Smiley Smile,* the Beach Boys had put out another album, *Wild Honey.* Bruce Johnston has very positive memories about that record. "I loved that album, honest to God, I loved that album because I thought it was getting us back on the track again. It was probably the funkiest Beach Boys album, very little production, but a lot of music without any complications. I just remember we wanted to be a band again. The whole thing had wiped everyone out, and we wanted to play together again." *Wild Honey* was a very primitive album, even in comparison to *Smiley Smile,* but it was no better accepted than its predecessor. This Beach Boys soul album was in part a response to critics' claims that the group consisted of ball-less choir boys. Critically, it was viewed as more lightweight fare, it didn't set the charts on fire, and it further alienated the rapidly shrinking legions of American Beach Boys fans. According to Carl, "*Wild Honey* was music for Brian to cool out by. He was still very spaced." The music was certainly more coherent than *Smiley Smile,* but while it was competent and enjoyable, it wasn't very important.

ROBERT ELLIS

There was no artistic pretension on this album. It was a return to the fun and simplicity of earlier albums, but that return wasn't particularly welcomed by the fans after all the previous advances. The title cut, "Darlin'," and a few others are great tunes; still, it's hard to listen to it and feel that Brian's creative heart was really in it. *Wild Honey* is the kind of music he can throw off the top of his head. Very nice but unspectacular.

Opposite, The Beach Boys filming in England. The group financed and produced an entire one-hour documentary for British television that has never been shown. Above, The Beach Boys at Hammersmith Odeon, London, 1968.

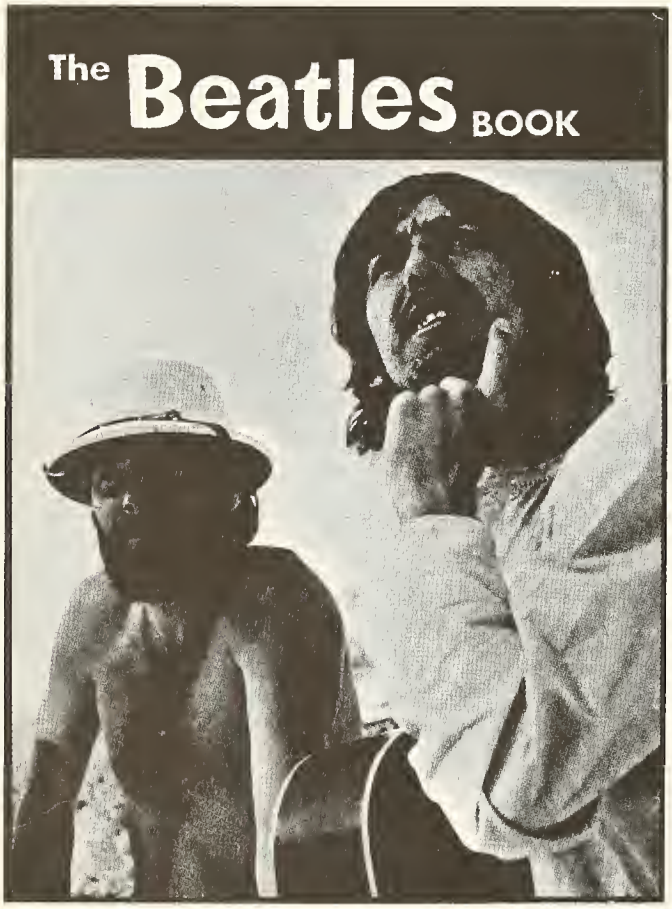
FRANK MORTON

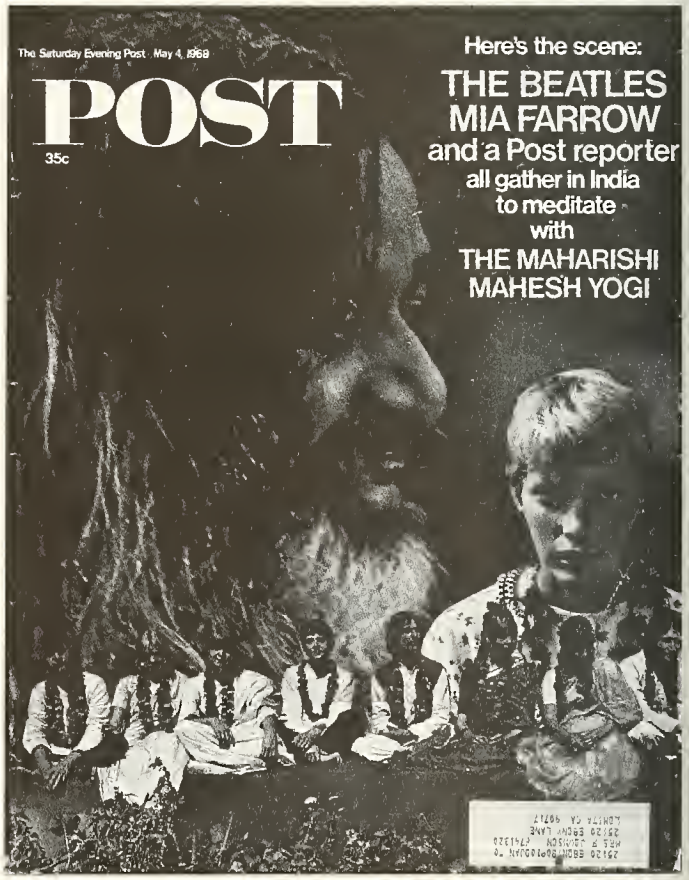
Some tried to claim that this return to simplicity was another example of Brian's leading the way. This theory emerged following Dylan's release of *John Wesley Harding,* which is a bare production. More likely, Brian had begun to ignore the outside world and was writing songs because it was his job, not out of any sense of artistry. Brian was tired of dealing with the demands of artistic leadership. Now, he was going to make records that reflected his lifestyle.

Although Brian was no longer interested in being a leader of the pop music world or the Beach Boys, he still enjoyed making music with his friends. Even these desires would be foiled by the group. Brian was producing a group called Redwood, led by Danny Hutton. Redwood went to work on "Darlin'," and all the instrumental tracks had been recorded. As Bruce Johnston noted, "Brian had written and produced 'Darlin'' for them [Redwood] and we [the Beach Boys] used it."

"In December of 1967," Bruce Johnston recalls, "we played a concert for UNICEF in Paris. Everyone from the Beach Boys to Marlon Brando, Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Johnny Hallyday, Ravi Shankar, Maharishi [Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the guru of Transcendental Meditation] was there." After the concert, the group flew to London, but Dennis remained behind and met the Maharishi. Dennis called the group in England and told them to fly back. Bruce Johnston remembers telling himself, "Oh, God, here we go again," and Bruce stayed in London while the rest of the band went back to Paris and were initiated into the ways of TM.

Unfortunately for the Beach Boys, their timing was way off. In 1968, the Beatles adopted the Maharishi and then





scorned him as a false prophet; because of that, the Beach Boys could ill afford to be associated with Transcendental Meditation or the Maharishi. *Friends,* an album influenced by Transcendental Meditation, was the first result of the association, another quickly made, gently produced LP. Brian's involvement was still decreasing, but he managed to spin out some gorgeous jazzy melodies. What was missing was the spirit. *Friends* is so laid back as to be almost soporific, which gives an accurate insight into what Brian Wilson was up to in 1968.

The title cut includes the lyrical plea "Let's Be Friends," but the standout autobiographical tune was "Busy Doin' Nothin'." Backed by a bossa nova beat, Brian's solo vocal describes a very mundane existence. Brian had mellowed somewhat in his retreat, and he'd found a certain peace away from the hectic demands of creation. Through the years, Brian has always named *Friends* as his favorite Beach Boys album. "It seems to fit the way I live better—it's simple and I can hear it any time without having to get into some mood. *Pet Sounds* carries a lot more emotion, at least for me. . . . [*Pet Sounds*] is by far our very best album. Still, though, my favorite is *Friends.*" The lack of emotion in *Friends,* the very reason it is Brian's favorite, is what makes the album such an important statement. Brian did not want to deal with emotions by 1968, particularly his own.

Meanwhile, the Beach Boys, who had risen to success rapidly, found themselves having trouble meeting the payroll after their five-year ride at the top of the charts ended. Starting in 1968, the Beach Boys began to "pay their dues," a rather novel approach to hitting the skids in that most major groups have their bad times before they make it big.

Friends, for the Beach Boys, brought yet another decline in sales, so the group took to the road to shore up their sagging finances. The disasters that befell them were impossible to predict; their timing and luck were incredibly bad.

The first fiscal disaster of 1968 occurred in April. The Beach Boys set up a tour of the Southeast with the Buffalo Springfield, the Strawberry Alarm Clock, and the Soul Survivors as supporting acts. A few days into the tour, Dr. Martin Luther King was murdered. The Beach Boys were in Nashville, setting up for that night's concert. That show and the rest of the tour were canceled and the group lost a small fortune.

The next tour was even worse. The Beach Boys had agreed to tour with the Maharishi to help him sell Transcendental Meditation to the world. Originally planned as a tour of colleges, the Beach Boys were booked into huge halls like Philadelphia's Spectrum. The Maharishi, meanwhile, decided to back out of the tour, and the Beach Boys had to threaten him with a lawsuit to get him to fulfill his obligations. Bruce Johnston recalls "the Maharishi giving his lecture and the audience screaming for the Beach Boys. . . . It was probably Mike Love of all the guys who was trying to promote the Maharishi. . . . We would charter a plane and have a funky band in the front of the plane, drinking and carrying on, and Maharishi in the back." The tour cost the Beach Boys between a quarter and a half million dollars. As Al Jardine noted at the time, "If anybody benefits from this tour, it'll be the florists."

Besides the monetary loss, the tour was also damaging to their image. Suffering from a lack of relevancy, the group was accused of trying to appear trendy because Transcendental Meditation was still an "in" thing. The truth was that the Beach Boys (except Bruce) were playing music for what they believed to be a good cause. The Beatles (listen to "Sexy Sadie") deserted the Maharishi but the Beach Boys stood by him. Whether the Beach Boys were right, naive, or misguided, they were again ahead of much of the country. The Beach Boys and TM were an item long before Merv Griffin gave it his seal of approval.

The group's image had become a serious problem. The Beach Boys were white middle-class men, and they had never been politically involved. While America's "Woodstock Generation" was just around the corner, the Beach Boys were alienating that generation's tastemakers. The Beach Boys' lack of perceived sociological or political relevance is what doomed them in the late 60s. The ferment of the "revolution" victimized many established figures, and the Beach Boys were an appropriate target. There was no pretense on their part. It was "accept us as what we are or don't accept us at all." America at that time had no use for the Beach Boys, so they became wandering troubadors and ambassadors of "good times" to the rest of the world, particularly England, Australia, and Western Europe. Bruce Johnston recalled "a time in 1968, believe it or not, when the Beach Boys drew two hundred people in New York City. And

Opposite bottom left, Mike Love and George Harrison in India. Above left, Al, Dennis, Mike, Carl, and Brian with the Maharishi. Mike Love: "When I heard about TM, I consciously took steps to expand my awareness. . . . I didn't want to live life at the same level twenty years from now. . . . And one of the greatest things that interested me is that he [Maharishi] said, 'You don't have to give up your Rolls-Royce . . . and forsake all the pursuits of material pleasures . . . to develop inner spiritual qualities.' That sounded real good to me."

ROBERT ELLIS

we went to England right after that and sold out a whole tour." Loathed and ignored in the United States, the group had a growing international following that would sustain them until the mid-1970s when America needed the Beach Boys' musical optimism.

In '67 and '68, the Beach Boys seemed to be heading in all the wrong areas, whether it was Transcendental Meditation, health foods (*Wild Honey*), or vegetarianism ("Vegetables"). In the summer of '68, though, the group did strike a vein in the American consciousness. With a summery song called "Do It Again," the Beach Boys had a single based on nostalgia. For those who were not being "Clean for Gene" or demonstrating in the streets of Chicago, "Do It Again" was a perfect call to arms, suntanned arms. It was irresistible, and it made it as high as number 20, the highest a Beach Boys record would get on the American charts until the summer of 1976. The record proved that Brian Wilson hadn't lost his magic touch; he just wasn't all that interested in using his wand on recycled "formula" records. He'd already done that years ago. Why did everybody want him to keep doing it again?

Above top, The Beach Boys at Hammersmith Odeon, 1968. Behind Bruce Johnston is bass player Ed Carter, who is still a member of the Beach Boys touring band. Above bottom, Van Dyke Parks' Song Cycle *LP is a great album, and it has become a cult favorite, but it was not commercially successful. It is probably a good indication of the internal lyrical coherence that Smile would have had, since Van Dyke Parks wrote it immediately after working with Brian.*

Brian Wilson lyrics have almost always consciously reflected his state of mind at the time of a song's creation. It's interesting to note that his next two songs released were "Time to Get Alone" and "I Went to Sleep." Those songs were on the Beach Boys' *20/20* album, the group's last LP of new material for Capitol (it was their twentieth single album release, including *Stack-o-Tracks* and greatest hits albums). The record was mostly a collection of recent singles, and Bruce Johnston remembers it as "a very un-Brian album, the first album where all the members of the band got to do what they really wanted to do."

Although it did not flow well, it was a strong album musically. "I Can Hear Music," Carl's first production, is fabulous, and side two in particular has some great vocals—a shimmering "deep and wide" on "Time to Get Alone," and a beautiful a cappella "Our Prayer" (cut at Capitol's studios while they were finishing up *20/20*). The highlight of the album, though, was the appearance of a portion of *Smile* under the title of "Cabinessence."

With the album's release in January 1969, the Beach Boys' career, in the parlance of Hollywood directors, appeared

to be "a wrap." Without a record contract at home, and United States concert crowds getting smaller and smaller, 1969 was a bad year for the Beach Boys in America both artistically and financially. Personally, Dennis Wilson's involvement with Charles Manson, Mike's latest divorce, and the strain of failure were beginning to tell within the group. Although they continued to record, there was no outlet for the music except for the one single they owed Capitol.

Because the group was still big in Europe, England, and Australia, they concentrated their efforts in 1969 overseas. In fact, things were so good for them in Europe that Deutsche Gramophone offered the group a contract that was very lucrative, considering their inability to sell records in the United States. Besides a huge advance for six Beach Boys albums, the contract also provided the group with money to produce other artists. The deal fell through for a number of reasons, not the least of which was Brian's surprise press conference in late May of 1969. On the eve of the Beach Boys' British tour, Brian called the press together to announce that "we're pretty low on money. We owe everyone money, and if we don't pick ourselves off our backsides and have a hit record soon, we will be in worse trouble . . . Nick Grillo, our business manager, says if we don't start climbing out of this mess, he will have to file bankruptcy in Los Angeles by the end of the year. . . . Things started deteriorating eighteen months ago. Thousands of dollars were being frittered away on stupid things. We spent a heck of a lot of [Beach Boys] corporation money on Brother Records. . . . When our records started to bomb, we looked around desperately for something to save ourselves. . . . [One hit] isn't enough to pay for our tremendous overheads. . . . We all know that if we don't watch it and do something drastic, inside a few months, we won't have a penny in the bank."

Brian had written and produced a new single, "Break Away," which he thought might change the group's fortunes. "It's the kind of disc that will either be a smash or a miserable flop. . . . The British tour, I hope, will help our waning popularity. I've always said 'be honest with your fans.' I don't see why I should lie and say everything is rosy when it's not. Sure, when we were making millions, I said we were. Now the shoe is on

JASPER DAILEY

Left, The Honeys in December, 1968, at one of their last recording sessions. Left to right: Diane, Marilyn, and Ginger. Below left, Brian and Marilyn with their first daughter, Carnie (born April 29, 1968). Their second child, Wendy, was born October 16, 1969. Below right, Carl holds his first son Jonah shortly after his birth in 1969. On Carl's right are his wife Annie and the Wilson brothers' mother, Audree. On Carl's left is Billy Hinsche. Carl and Annie have another son, Justin.

COURTESY OF THE BEACH BOYS

ZOOM/DEZO HOFFMAN

the other foot."

The overhead that Brian referred to was the group's huge office complex/rehearsal hall on Ivar Street in Hollywood. That office was necessary to keep up a corporate image of a prospering business, but the Beach Boys, never a thrifty bunch, hadn't saved a lot. As one associate explains, "they never thought there would be a time when they wouldn't be popular and making lots of money." Nick Grillo has been accused of making bad investments on the group's behalf, including a large piece of property in California's Simi Valley. It wasn't that it was a bad property. The Beach Boys corporation just couldn't meet the mortgage payments after a while because there wasn't a big enough cash flow, and they eventually lost their investment. There was virtually no income from records, and the profitable American concert scene had dried up for the group.

Daryl Dragon, the Captain of Captain and Tennille fame, joined the Beach Boys as a touring member in 1967 and remembers how bad things eventually got for the group. "On that first tour in 1967, it was Ron Brown on bass and me on keyboards. We were the only outside musicians at that time. They had Cadillacs, and I thought, 'Boy, this is really first-class, limousines to the gig, and the kids were beating on the windows, just like you hear happened to the Beatles.' I thought, 'Wow, it can only go up from here,' and then they started to go down a little bit, and they started to rent Chevrolets instead of Cadillacs. They just couldn't afford it. All they could afford to do was to promote the group . . . mostly it was hard times."

According to Dragon, the English tours were successful in filling seats, but those sellouts didn't make much money. "I toured with them in England, and the major reaction of the audience was curiosity. A lot of the younger kids just wanted to see the Beach Boys and think the sun was out. England doesn't get much sun. They didn't make any money there. It was more to keep their name going, in the public eye. The worst thing you can do is stop everything. They could always play their hits."

Those tours weren't exactly a lot of fun, the way Daryl remembers it. "We went out for three weeks in 1970, and it felt like four months. I was really tired because they used to do two and three concerts a day in two different cities and

A few months after the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Beach Boys (above) played at a Prague music festival. Of the Beach Boys' thousands of concerts, Mike Love remembers that show as "the epitome of the event transcending the music. The reception was probably the most unbelievable we ever got anywhere.

Mike's role in the Beach Boys' success cannot be underestimated. In the early years, it was he who sang the lead vocal on most of the uptempo hits the group is remembered for. Onstage, Mike is the one Beach Boy who communicates directly with the audience, using between songs patter, pantomime, and his surfer's cock walk to create an atmosphere of fun that complements the music well. Although his routines are corny, they are effective, and the group's longevity and popularity as a live act are due largely to Mike Love.

stuff like that. One year, they had two different PA systems and one would jump by the other. They'd alternate, so one could be in one place and the other in another place. . . . We'd do one concert during the afternoon and another at night . . . just jump in the car or on the plane and go to the next one. There were days when Carl would have to sing four hours in one day, and he'd lose his voice."

And these weren't major metropolises the group was playing. Bruce Johnston recalls being booked at such places as the Corn Palace in Mitchell, South Dakota. According to Bruce, the guys for a while really scraped "the bottom of the barrel."

By the end of the decade, the group had so little money that Fred Vail, (who had returned to work for the group after a lengthy absence), financed a Beach Boys' tour out of his own pocket. The group had exhausted all available credit, and Vail charged twelve thousand dollars worth of flying and dining and hotel rooms on his personal credit cards to keep the Beach Boys on the road so they could generate income. A sympathetic Beverly Hills banker ignored the fact that the mortgage payments weren't being met. Otherwise, the Beach Boys corporate members (Brian, Dennis, Carl, and Mike) would have probably had to sell their homes.

None of this was ever made public, but Brian's mid-1969 press conference alerted the world to the group's financial troubles. That's one reason the Deutsche Gramophone deal fell through. The other reasons are more hidden. When the Beach Boys played their new material for Polydor (Deutsche's American affiliate), Polydor refused to sign the Beach Boys because they didn't like the music, or they didn't like the Beach Boys personally.

Meanwhile, "Break Away," the song Brian thought might save the sinking ship, was released and ignored in the United States, although it did well overseas. Bruce Johnston feels that it was Murry who "forced the song to be a good track." Bruce also marks that record as "when Brian stopped singing high. . . . He had been singing lower and lower. The way it's voiced, it sounds like a bunch of old men. It doesn't sound like the Beach Boys." It remains one of the great unnoticed Brian Wilson arrangements and productions; the lyrics (cowritten with Murry, disguised as Reggie Dunbar) are another autobiographical effort.

Time will not wait for me
Time is my destiny
Why change the part of me
That has to be free

The Love that passed me by
I found no reason why
But now each day is filled with love
That very same love
That passed me by
And that is why

I can Break Away from that lonely life
And I can do what I want to do
And Break Away from that empty life
And my world is new

Lyrically, it seems that Brian was considering a break from the group, as the release of "Break Away" marked the end of the Beach Boys' contractual obligations.

Murry's source of income through the years had been the Sea of Tunes Publishing Company. As the group's records stopped selling in the late sixties, Murry's income dried up. Sometime in late '69 or early '70, Murry sold Sea of Tunes to A & M Records for a large sum of money. At the time, the Beach Boys' corporation didn't have the money to purchase Sea of Tunes from Murry, but what upset the Beach Boys was that Murry didn't even tell them he was selling their work until after the fact.

A & M's Chuck Kaye, who was responsible for the purchase, found that he had a problem when he began reading the lyrics to Brian's songs. He felt it would be unlikely for middle-of-the-road singers to record a song like "Don't Worry Baby" because of the lyrics. Tony Asher recalls that he was asked by Chuck Kaye if he would be interested in writing new lyrics to some of the songs. While no revisions were ever made, this incident remains notable as an indication of Brian's feelings at that time. According to one account, when Chuck Kaye called Brian to find out if it would be okay to rewrite the songs, Brian expressed supreme disinterest. Today, Chuck Kaye insists that the earlier report was inaccurate. Brian, according to Kaye, was enthusiastic about the changes and was "all for anything that would improve the songs."

A more poignant (and undisputed) example of Brian's state of mind is related by Hal Blaine, who received an unusual visit from Brian one day. Brian came "over one afternoon with a box filled with (his gold) records, and wanted me to have 'em all." Blaine couldn't convince Brian to keep the records for himself, and a number of the records hang on the wall in Blaine's home, "A couple that Brian insisted I take." Brian was disassociating himself from his past.

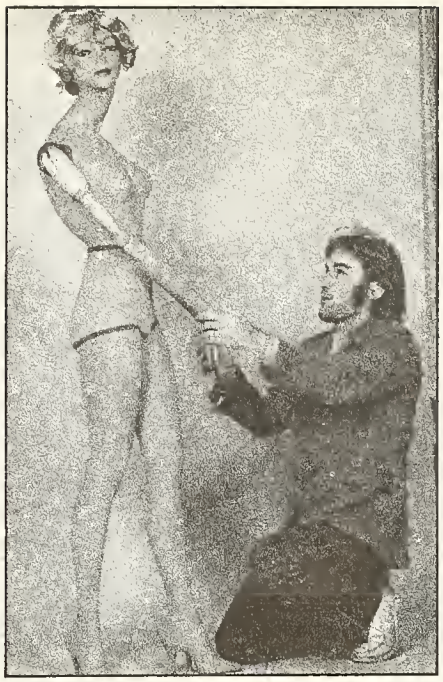
By that time, the media had created an image of Brian as a reclusive genius whose life revolved around paranoid reminiscences of his former musical greatness. Nothing, however, could have been further from the truth. Brian had basically abandoned his music; he'd found a new niche, as part-owner and proprietor of a West Hollywood health food store called the "Radiant Radish." The image of Brian Wilson as reclusive genius is especially ridiculous when you consider that on most any night, one could just walk into the store and see and talk to Brian Wilson. He would even give you advice on what vitamins to take. Like most of Brian's passions, this too was shortlived and lasted only a couple of weeks.

In early 1970, the group (following talks with CBS and MGM Records) finally secured a record contract with Warner Brothers. Mo Ostin, the president of Warners, believed that the Beach Boys represented an important part of American music. The deal even included a reactivation of the Beach Boys' dormant Brother Records. Beach Boys albums would be released on Brother/Reprise and non-Beach Boy-Brother product was to be channeled through Starday/King. This new contract succeeded in reactivating Brian's recording interest, and he became very much a part of the proceedings as the Beach Boys began to produce their next album.

Around that same time, there was another striking example of the inaccuracy of the myth that Brian Wilson was

a reclusive non-performing Beach Boy. In the winter of 1970, Brian went on a short tour with the group. Brian recalled. "When Mike Love was sick, I went with the group up to Seattle and Vancouver and the Northwest for some appearances. I was scared for a few minutes in the first show—it had been a while since I was in front of so many people. But after it started to cook I really got with it. It was the best three days of my life."

While Brian's 1970 tour is a little-known fact, Mike Love's illness is even less known. According to Tom Nolan's 1971 *Rolling Stone* article, Mike was hospitalized following a three-week fast that allowed Mike to eat only water, fruit juice (out of his ever-present and occasionally dangerous jug), and a little yogurt. As Nolan wrote, "Everything got very amplified during the fast, he became quite sensitive to all positive and negative forces around him. He began to look at things rather metaphorically. The birds in the sky seemed to have a purpose in flying southwesterly, and if he could try a little harder perhaps he could talk to the birds. . . . As he protested, 'I'm fine, I'm going to Hawaii to mellow out,' his brother drove him to a hospital and said, 'You'd better check this boy over.' They simply found that he hadn't been eating. Once he started to eat and meditate again, he was out in four or five days." Former members of the Beach Boys entourage remember, however, that Mike had really flipped out, and spent many weeks hospitalized.



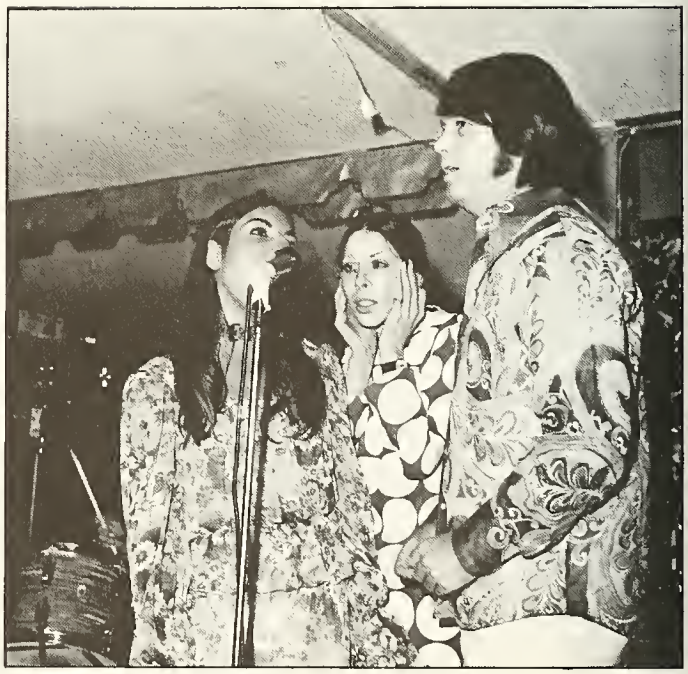
JASPER DAILEY

Right, Contract signing, July 1970. Back row (from left to right): Nick Grillo, publishing executive Rick Landy, and Carl Wilson. Front row, Brian and Mike. Below left, Jamming with the Flame at an L.A. club., 1970. On the 20 / 20 *album, the Beach Boys recorded a song called "Never Learn Not to Love." It is credited to Dennis Wilson, but it was, in fact, written by Charles Manson. It appears on Manson's album as "Cease to Exist."*

Mike Love's rarely discussed illness makes the Beach Boys' public relations image curiouser and curiouser. For years, the group has allowed the tale to be told that Brian Wilson was the crazy, drug-using Beach Boy. That image is inaccurate when the lives of the other Beach Boys are examined. While Al Jardine's life has been smooth and clean, the rest of the band have indulged in considerable drug use from time to time. Dennis's involvement with Charles Manson and Mike Love's illness are usually glossed over, as is the fact that both Dennis and Mike have had a number of unsuccessful marriages. Carl's marriage to Annie Hinsche has survived some incredibly hard times.

The group's near-obsession with Transcendental Meditation is particularly understandable when one sees that their personal and professional lives have been full of stress. Still, at times, the group seems almost to have hidden behind Brian's "insanity." Brian had reduced

EARL LEAF



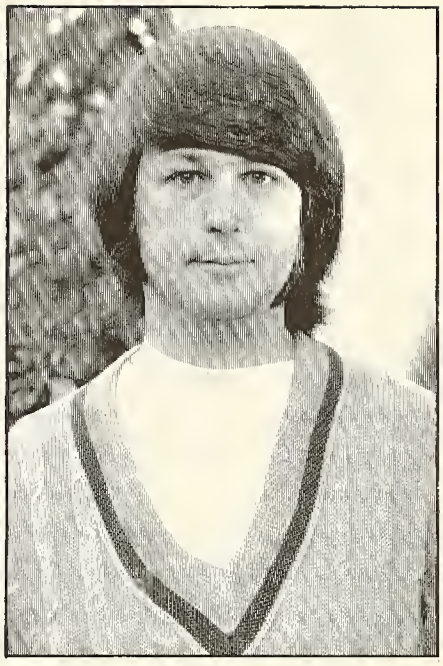
EARL LEAF

his visibility, and it was assumed he was hiding because he was crazy. Actually, Brian was out and about, but if that fact were well known, then the Beach Boys would have to explain his limited involvement with their records. The "unspeakable" truth was that Brian wasn't all that interested in being part of the Beach Boys' records. Rather than assess the group's problems objectively, it was always easier to point in one direction. Brian's misfortune was to be the man that everybody was pointing at.

At this juncture, it might help to get back to the more typical insensitivity of the record industry. The business must take its fair share of the blame for creating commercial problems for the group as well as contributing to Brian's emotional problems. It has already been noted that Capitol went out of their way not to promote *Pet Sounds*, and that Capitol released "Barbara Ann" without asking or telling the group. Capitol wanted more fun songs from the Beach Boys, and when Brian refused to provide them, Capitol decided to concentrate on the past instead of the future. As the Beach Boys' music grew artistically in '66 and '67, Capitol released two haphazardly compiled greatest hits packages as well as the first of the countless repackages, *The Beach Boys Deluxe Set*. In 1967, in the middle of the acid days, Capitol was promoting the Beach Boys as if it were the summer of '63. The Beach Boys were no longer surfers, (not that they'd ever been), but Capitol kept pushing "Fun, Fun, Fun."

Capitol, of course, wasn't happy to watch the Beach Boys decline as a hit-making machine, but they never seemed to have any good ideas as to how to slow the group's slump. For instance, just after *Friends* was released, Capitol released *Stack-o-Tracks*. This is a fun and fascinating collection of backing tracks of Beach Boys songs, but it couldn't have helped sell *Friends*.

On top of their poor promotion of the group's post-*Party* LPs, Capitol also made it hard to purchase the Beach Boys' new records. Sometimes, within months of an album's release, it was no longer on sale in the record stores. Capitol also put together numerous repackages of the early Beach Boys LPs and the original releases became collector's items. Capitol almost forced the fans to buy the repackages of hits by making the original albums unavailable. It is ironic that in 1974, Capitol would create a new Beach Boys repackage called *Endless Summer* that would help the group find a brand new and very large audience.



BOB JENKINS

After eight years of cold Hollywood business from Capitol, the group was ready for the more gentle Burbank treatment of Warner Brothers, which had a growing reputation for taking care of their artists. There was no way to predict that the Beach Boys' relationship with Warners would be as stormy as the one with Capitol.

As the seventies began, the Beach Boys were in Brian's home studio recording many new songs. The first music to emerge was a wonderful single, "Add Some Music to Your Day," backed with "Susie Cincinnati." Warners wanted to impress their new artists and prevailed upon distributors to purchase large quantities of the single. It was soon reported to be the fastest selling 45-rpm record in the company's history. The only problem was there was nobody coming into the stores to buy the records. The Beach Boys' new records in those days got virtually no airplay, except by stalwart fans like Peter Fornatale at WNEW-FM in New York, but one D.J. at one very progressive radio station

doesn't make hits. The group and Warners were not very happy with the results, and the relationship was off to a bad start.

Things only got worse when Warners rejected the album the Beach Boys submitted. The company wanted a stronger album so off came a number of cuts ("I Just Got My Pay," "Carnival," "When Girls Get Together," "Two Can Play," "Lady" and "Susie Cincinnati"), and they were replaced with more acceptable material. Finally, the album came out. Originally titled *Add Some Music,* the name was changed to *Sunflower,* and it was cleverly packaged as a very humble "album offering." It garnered great reviews, and was a terrible sales disaster, possibly the worst-selling album in the group's history.

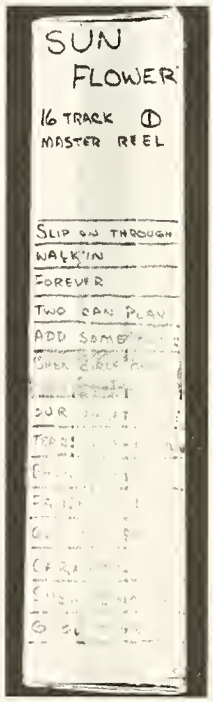
That was especially devastating because, quite simply, the group had come up with an incredible record. It was the first album that could come close to equaling *Pet Sounds* on a production level, partly the result of studio engineer Steve Desper's fine work. The Beach Boys' harmonies were present in a way that had been missing since *Summer Days . . .* and it was probably the truest group effort ever in that it was a showcase for all the individuals in the band. Brian's presence was obvious, but the others, particularly Dennis, contributed some very strong material. It was, claims Bruce Johnston, the last real Beach Boys album because it was the last one to have been produced with both Brian's interest and active participation.

Brian's work on *Sunflower* was on a par with some of his best efforts. One song in particular, "This Whole World," was an amazing composition. Daryl Dragon, who is a classically trained musician, said, "From a harmony standpoint, I've never heard a song like that since I've been in pop music. I've never heard a song go through that many changes and then come back." Brian also provided some transcendental doo-wop with the background vocals, "*OM* bop dit it."

One tune on the album was disturbing to Brian. He said, "In 'Cool, Cool Water' there's a chant I wish we hadn't used. It fits all right, but there's just something I don't quite think is right in it." The chant that Brian was referring to was recorded during the *Smile* era, reportedly once part of *Smile's* "Elements" section. Originally titled "I Love to Say Dada," it was supposedly the water segment. Brian's discomfort at its inclusion on *Sunflower* was understandable. *Smile* was still very special to him, and he didn't like to deal with it, particularly out of its proper context. It was

Below, Sunflower *originally had a different song alignment and a different title. Brian worked with many people other than the Beach Boys in the '60s and '70s. His non-Beach Boys productions met with little success, but Brian did have many hits as a composer and singer with Jan and Dean. Besides the Honeys and Spring, Brian produced flop records for Sharon Marie, Paul Petersen, Gary Usher, Rachel and the Revolvers, Glen Campbell, and Ron Wilson.*

In the mid-60s, Brian also produced a record called "Pamela Jean" by the Survivors. Actually, it's the Beach Boys in disguise.



COURTESY OF WARNER BROTHERS RECORDS

also an indication that Brian *still* didn't have control over his music.

The critical praise the record received hardly paid the bills. Brian, who had shown new interest with *Sunflower,* was very hurt by its sales failure. That, on top of the old, unhealed scars, was a hurt he really didn't begin to get over until 1976.

For the Beach Boys, it was a great disappointment. The setback didn't make them any less determined to forge a comeback, though, so they went back to Europe, where they were loved.

"Beach Boys Mobbed in U.K." read the headline in a music trade publication. The story, datelined London, read as follows:

The Beach Boys were mobbed in London on a recent Monday night as they arrived for a seven-week European tour. More than 100 reporters joined with admirers in braving a chilling wind and rain to meet the Beach Boys at a press reception. . . . The group answered questions mostly centered on their new album release in England, Sunflower, *which British critics call "The Beach Boys'* Sgt. Pepper." *The album has been out less than one week, and it already is indicated to be their most popular recording in history, according to EMI Records.*

Upon returning from that overseas tour, the Beach Boys took the first steps towards realigning themselves with the "peace and love" generation that had reached a peak at Woodstock. The Beach Boys were about to settle an account that was long overdue.

Charles Manson

"Charles Manson." Those three syllables shattered the late night/early morning silence at Dennis Wilson's beach house. Without any prodding, Dennis had steered our marathon conversation to the one topic that has been taboo in every interview he's granted since the Tate/Labianca murders in 1969. He has steadfastly refused to discuss his involvement with the Manson Family, and has usually become upset whenever the subject was mentioned. For some perverse reason, he himself had brought it up. "You probably want to know all about that," he continued. "I guess it's time to talk about it.

"You see, when I knew Manson it was no big thing. We were friends; we lived together. That was long before the murders. And we'd talk every night, just like you and me. We'd really talk about important things."

The obvious question is, "Do you know why Manson organized those murders?" Dennis stares into space, and softly reveals. "I know why Charles Manson did what he did. Someday, I'll tell the world. I'll write a book and explain why he did it." Dennis realizes that isn't a satisfactory answer, and with a fearful sigh, goes on. "Over the years, people have always wanted to know what happened, what my relationship with Charlie was." Dennis again insists, "We were just friends." There is no evidence to contradict that statement. Dennis Wilson was in no way involved with the Manson Family murders, nor did he have any knowledge of what had occurred.

Years after the murders, the memory of his fear remains strong. The Family allegedly made numerous threats on Dennis's life, and Dennis would pick up the telephone and hear, "You're next." Still, Dennis does have intimate knowledge of Manson's thought processes, and it is this insight that Dennis to this day refuses to share. "I didn't testify at the trial. I couldn't. I was so scared. You know, the writers really raked me over the coals for not testifying." As he didn't testify in 1970, Dennis doesn't reveal any more on this occasion. His opening comment was no more than a tease.

Dennis first met Charles Manson in the late spring of 1968. According to prosecuting attorney Vincent Bugliosi in his book *Helter Skelter,* Dennis "twice picked up the same pair of hitchhikers while driving through Malibu. The second time, he took the girls home with him." At the time, Dennis was living at 14400 Sunset Boulevard near Will Rogers State park.

The evening he picked up the hitchhikers for the second time, Dennis went to a recording session. Returning at three A.M., Dennis was met by a stranger, Charles Manson. When he entered the house, Dennis found out that he had nearly a dozen houseguests, most of them girls.

To understand why Dennis Wilson, a rich and famous rock star, would get involved with the Family is a question that is hard to understand. By one account, Dennis in 1968 was feeling a lot of guilt about his material wealth. He didn't think he deserved it, so he reportedly gave away his money to total strangers. Dennis also had recently divorced his first wife, Carol; Scotty, his adopted and beloved son was living with Carol.

At first, Charles Manson and his Family must have appeared harmless to Dennis and his friends. Dennis introduced Manson to many people including Terry

Melcher and Gregg Jakobson. Gregg, a close friend of Dennis's, spent many hours talking with Manson and reportedly felt a certain affinity for Manson's philosophies.

Besides the appeal of the male-dominated lifeway that Manson directed, both Dennis and Gregg supposedly felt that Manson's preachings were correct. For Dennis, Manson was a spiritual guru. While they lived together, Dennis appeared to be very much under his spell. In an article in England's *Rave* magazine, Dennis spoke of his "wizard." "Sometimes," Dennis admitted, "the wizard frightens me." The "wizard" Dennis referred to was Charles Manson. That fear wasn't overpowering, not yet. Manson's talking was just ideas at that time.

In the late summer of 1968, Dennis tired of the Manson Family's exploitation (which reportedly cost him about a hundred thousand dollars), and moved into a small room in Gregg Jakobson's Beverly Glen home. Dennis left the task of evicting the Family to the Beach Boys' business management.

Even though Dennis wasn't living with Manson anymore, a friend of Dennis's remembers that "Dennis was still hypnotized enough by Manson to think he was going to do something tremendous. Dennis used to draw lots of symbols in his notes, all the time practically quoting verbatim what Manson had been saying." This friend recalls that "Dennis and Gregg were scared off long before the murders happened. They finally had realized that they were involved with someone who was different than what they had first thought. They still saw him, but they were becoming afraid of him. It was only weeks before the murders that they became aware that Manson was really dangerous. That's when they tried to have nothing to do with him."

Just after the August 1969 murders, Manson visited Dennis and demanded money ($1,500) so he could go to the desert. Two friends of Dennis's remember that night as "the first time we met him. We were at Gregg's, down in Dennis's little room. Dennis was playing the piano. All of a sudden, the door flew open and he [Manson] came flying through the air, jumped into the room. His eyes were just like on fire." Dennis greeted Manson and nervously asked him where he'd been lately. Charlie replied, "I been to the moon."

Dennis's friends recall that Manson's hair was standing straight out on its end, and there was a tremendous amount of energy in the room. "His eyes were so magnetic. This was the night Manson told Dennis that he was going to kidnap Scotty if Dennis didn't give Manson money." According to Bugliosi's account, Manson said, "Don't be surprised if you never see your kid again." By some horrible coincidence, Scotty ran away from home the next day. Naturally, everyone assumed the worst, but Scotty came home unharmed.

The Tate/Labianca murders were terrifying to the whole country, but to those who lived in Los Angeles, there was a special fear. Although it took the police a long time to connect the two cases, the bizarre murders had people buying guns, guard dogs, and hiring security agencies. When Manson and three Family members were charged with the murders, the fear in Los Angeles remained because so many of the Family's members were still on the streets. Nobody knew where they might strike next.

The night of Manson's arrest in the fall of 1969, he apparently tried to contact Dennis for help. That night, Gregg Jakobson's wife was giving birth, and Gregg and Dennis had taken her to the hospital. Dennis's live-in friends had stayed home, and one of them answered a "collect phone call for Dennis, and it was from Manson. I had already gotten instructions from Dennis and Gregg that they wanted nothing to do with him. I said, 'No, I'm sorry, he's not here.' And Manson yelled, 'I don't care, anybody accept the charges,' and he started screaming like a wild man. He said, 'You're going to be fucking sorry if you don't—' and the operator cut him off as soon as he cursed. The next morning I said to Dennis and Gregg, 'By the way, you got a phone call last night from Charlie, and he was at a police station.' They were so upset about Gregg's wife losing the baby that they just didn't want to hear anything about it. And I said, 'Well, he's in jail.' And they said, 'We don't care,' and that was it."

In the Family's attempts to stop Dennis from testifying at the trial, there were threats made on Dennis's life. Besides these direct threats, the Family supposedly intimidated Dennis by "creepy crawling" Dennis's home. This consisted of sneaking into Dennis's home while he was asleep and moving the furniture around at night. It was like a calling card—the Family's way of letting a person know that despite all the security, they could penetrate his defenses and get inside his home.

Another friend of Dennis's remembers how all this was shaking Dennis up. "It was really weird to see someone who seems to be in control of things get really spaced out by a noise in the bushes. He was very nervous. He couldn't sit for more than two minutes at a time." This fear wasn't Dennis's alone. The entire Wilson family reportedly feared for their lives.

Dennis never did testify at the Family's trial, but did have an extensive conversation with prosecutor Bugliosi. Dennis's testimony wasn't essential because Gregg Jakobson was willing to publicly testify and corroborate what Dennis had revealed only in private.

The Manson connection with the Beach Boys provided a certain unwelcome notoriety, but it also was one indication that the "Fun, Fun, Fun" image had new and more bizarre meanings. Dennis offered Bugliosi one final observation on his whole involvement with Manson. "I'm the luckiest guy in the world, because I got off only losing my money."

11.
SURF'S UP

Although *Sunflower* had received good reviews in the rock press, including *Rolling Stone*, there was still a stigma attached to the group's image, particularly from the point of view of the "West Coast consciousness" that was centered in *Rolling Stone*'s San Francisco offices.

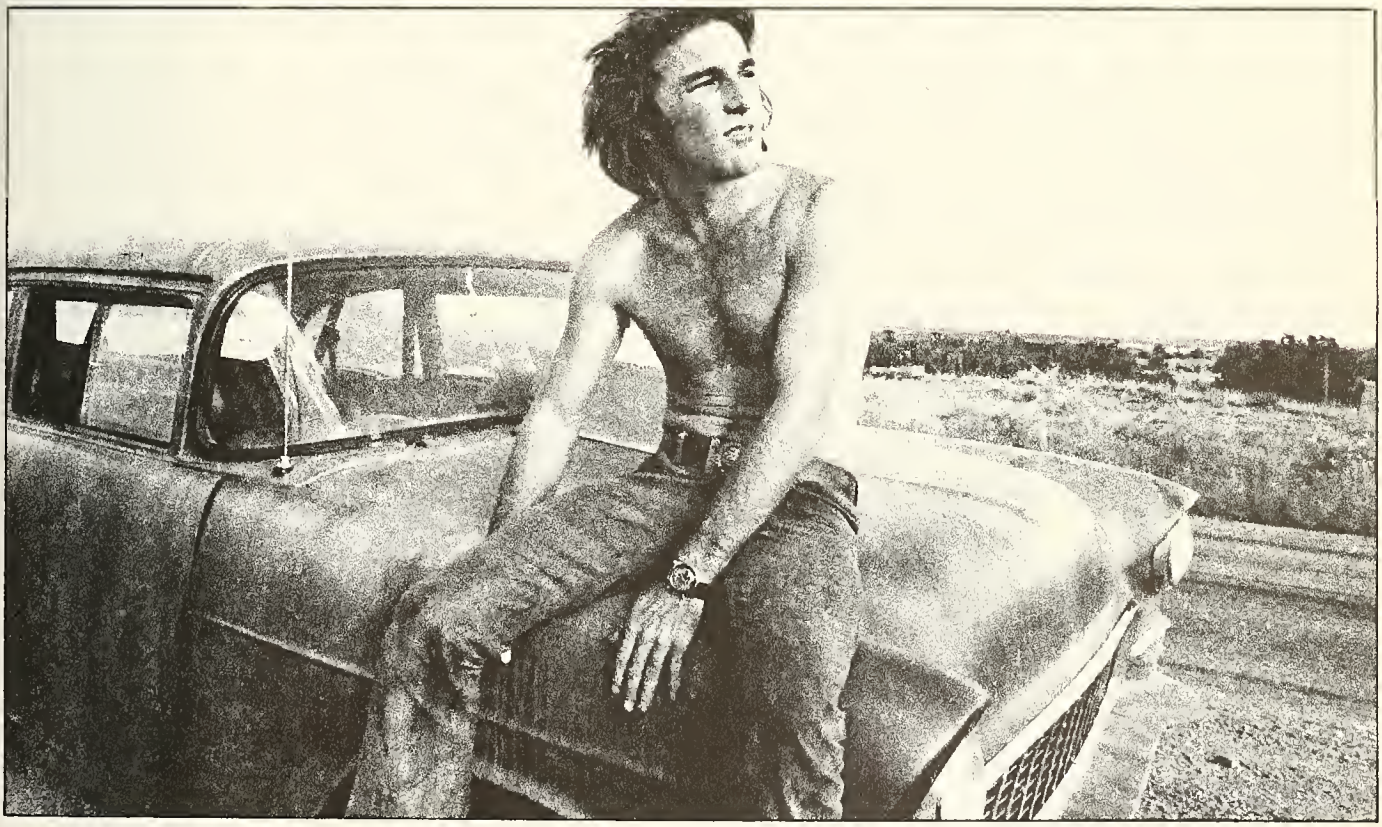
From the moment the Beach Boys failed to show up at the Monterey Festival in 1967, until the day they played the festival in 1970 at Big Sur, the Beach Boys were outcasts in California. Ben Edmonds points out that "during that period out here, the Beach Boys were still regarded as outdated teen relics. They [the Californians] didn't see the connection between the Beach Boys and the Buffalo Springfield and Crosby, Stills and Nash. To them, West Coast culture *was* CSN, the Springfield and so on. On the East Coast, there was always a great intellectual appreciation of the Beach Boys and Brian Wilson. Paul Williams in *Crawdaddy* really understood the implications of the Beach Boys, while at the same time, *Rolling Stone* on the West Coast was dismissing them."

The Beach Boys were about to shock their homeland, and begin the long climb back from obscurity.

In October of 1970, the Beach Boys finally did something right for the folks at *Rolling Stone*. They played the Big Sur Folk Festival and stole the show. People who had been putting down the Beach Boys as an anachronism when the concert started were dancing in the aisles by the end of the first set. The response was so strong that, after closing the afternoon segment of the festival, the Beach Boys just left their equipment onstage and opened the evening portion of the concert. And blew the audience away with music.

Jann Wenner's article in his own *Rolling Stone* was almost an apology. "The Monterey International Pop Festival finally ended. The Beach Boys, the very first of the California groups, closed the show . . . the occasion was the eighth annual Big Sur Folk Festival . . . and the Beach Boys—the one act that didn't show up at Monterey, the group that went right to the genesis of California Music. . . ." Finally, the Beach Boys had been forgiven. Finally, they were understood by the man who controlled the most powerful rock magazine in the world. *Rolling Stone*'s acceptance of the group was belated, but they helped make up for that by playing a major role in the group's renaissance.

The key to the group's comeback was a man named Jack Rieley. Rieley appeared virtually out of nowhere one day, claiming that he'd worked for NBC News and won a Pulitzer Prize. Somehow, he convinced Brian to do a radio interview for a show that Rieley hosted on Los Angeles's Pacifica public radio station, KPFK. Rieley, sensing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, quickly presented his ideas to the group and became an important cog in the Beach Boys' operation, directing their career on a creative level and ultimately taking over the group's business affairs.



Opposite, Brian made up for Halloween, 1971. Above top (from left to right): Mimi Fariña, Carl, Al, Mike, and Bruce at the Big Sur Folk Festival. Above bottom, Dennis played the mechanic in Two-Lane Blacktop, *a film that also starred James Taylor, Warren Oates, and Laurie Bird.*

However Rieley may have eventually damaged the Beach Boys finances, his creative ideas were the perfect solution to their image problems. Jack got the group to play many politically advantageous concerts, changed the focus of the lyrics to reflect the concerns of the day and basically made the Beach Boys more relevant. It was a clever public relations effort. Rieley remembered that "one of the things was to just say it right out in a series of advertisements, 'It's safe now to listen to the Beach Boys.'" More and more, people were beginning to believe that.

Another of the Beach Boys' new interests was a South African group called the Flame. The Beach Boys had discovered them playing in a London club, and Carl in particular thought they had great potential. The Flame was signed to Brother Records and their album, described by reviewers as Beatlesque, was the only record ever released on Brother that wasn't a Beach Boys' disc. The members of the group were black, and this gave the Beach Boys an additional boost in "hipness," although that wasn't the motivation behind the association. The Beach Boys really felt that the Flame was going to be big. Unfortunately, the first album flopped, and the second was never issued due to personal and personnel problems. The Flame, however, would be the training ground for two future Beach Boys.

COURTESY OF FRED VAIL

In 1970, though, the Beach Boys were really pushing the Flame. When the Beach Boys' resurgence first began, they insisted that the Flame be their opening act, a plan that they first implemented after the Big Sur Festival, when they returned to Los Angeles and played a four-night stand at the Whisky A Go Go nightclub. It was the group's first formal L.A. appearance since they had played the Hollywood Bowl in '66. Bruce Johnston remembers those shows fondly. "The Whisky gig was great. It was just to remind people that we were still around—they thought we'd broken up. The line went three blocks up the mountain. Brian played one set." There are various accounts of how many sets Brian played, but his return to performing was cut short, supposedly because the onstage volume began to hurt his one good ear. More, it was another case of stage fright. The audience response was fantastic at the Whisky, but the onstage feelings weren't all good. Daryl Dragon recalls, "I didn't feel it was any kind of reunion for them, just a gig because it was close to home." Daryl also remembers that there were still "a lot of weird things going on between Brian and Mike, just old things that haven't been resolved."

The next big step was a concert at New York's Carnegie Hall ("Playing in the myth," as Bruce Johnston put it), and this was a show with a unique story. The Fillmore East wouldn't book the Beach Boys because the group had drawn such a small audience on their previous appearance. Three Beach Boys fans, who worked in the music business, decided that if they wanted to see the Beach Boys, they'd have to hire them. Mike

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Opposite (clockwise from top right): At the Whisky, November 4, 1970—Brian is at the far right; Carl; Dennis with his second wife Barbara; Brian and Mike backstage; Brian greeting a friend in the audience. Left, The Flame (from top to bottom): Ricky Fataar, Blondie Chaplin, "Brother" Fataar, and Steve Fataar. The three brothers and a friend are from Durban, South Africa. Above, Jack Rieley (left) and Bruce. In a six-page memo to the Beach Boys dated August 8, 1970, Rieley outlined a plan to revitalize the group's career in the United States: "As you all have no doubt learned, I've been very much into the group's music for a very long time. Perhaps our paths should have crossed earlier. . . . I don't believe I'd be presuming too much to say we all agree generally that the Beach Boys face a continuing problem with the image . . . predominating in this country. . . . For the purposes of this friendly little note, I have decided to label the problem simply: HOW TO LET THE FOLKS OUT THERE IN RECORD-BUYING LAND KNOW WHERE THE GROUP IS AT MUSICALLY AND TO TRANSLATE THAT KNOWLEDGE INTO INCREASED RECORD SALES AND POPULARITY FOR THE BEACH BOYS." Rieley then outlined the group's career and explained how the Beach Boys should convince the public that the group is ecologically and politically concerned.

Klenfner, Chip Rachlin, and George Brown (as Krab Productions) rented Carnegie Hall for a February evening in '71, and as Rachlin remembered, "It eventually sold out the night of the show."

The Beach Boys' performance was quite remarkable. Opening with "Heroes and Villains," they proceeded to play a two-hour set that included a smattering of hits, but concentrated on the artistic material from *Pet Sounds* onward. That approach was new for the group, mostly the result of their dissatisfaction following their fall 1970 overseas tour. The Beach Boys were tired of being a fifty-minute jukebox of hits.

Carnegie Hall was a revelation for the Beach Boys. As Bruce Johnston remembers, "We were absolutely astonished at the reaction. After having people tell us how boring we were, and how out-of-time we were, we did this concert and everybody just went 'Ooooh!' They just loved the Beach Boys." Following that show, the group returned home and according to Bruce, "The concert at the Santa Monica Civic was fabulous, that's probably the best L.A. gig ever." Bruce feels that 1971 was his favorite time with the group musically because they were playing so many songs that had never been played before, and the oldies were mostly in the encores. Bruce points out that "Unfortunately, it's not that way now." The oldies are now the body of the show. Back then, the new material worked.

EARL LEAF

The 1971 Beach Boys concerts were the best from a true music fan's point of view. With a full horn section, extra percussionists and the exciting spirit emanating from the stage, their '71 concerts had an exceptionally full and moving sound. The hits were reserved for a compact portion of the program at the end, but the opening song was often "Good Vibrations." That's how good they were; they could open with a peak, and still get better. The best moments included satisfying versions of songs like "Cool, Cool Water," "Heroes and Villains," and "Country Air," and emotional, touching love songs played by Dennis at the piano (the still-unreleased "Barbara" and "I've Got A Friend"). Nothing could top Carl's magnificent rendition of "Surf's Up." Backed by a great horn arrangement by Daryl Dragon, there was a definite magic to

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Carl's performance. That song connected with the audience of hard-core fanatics, who gave Carl a standing ovation.

In the midst of this artistic recovery, there was a severe organizational shake-up. Jack Rieley, according to Bruce Johnston, "somehow stirred everybody up." Rieley has been accused by his victims of using backstabbing techniques. Supposedly, Rieley would create dissension within the ranks by talking behind peoples' backs, and then establish himself as the one central figure they could all "trust." Nick Grillo and Fred Vail were both squeezed out of the operation, without much thanks. Grillo left in a cloud of accusations that he was a crook and a liar, suddenly fired one day with little notice or chance to defend himself against the accusations. And they were strong accusations, that Nick had "lined his pockets" with Beach Boys money. One participant politely noted that "Nick had taken advantage of the situation he was in." Others claim that he failed to pay the group's bills and that the IRS once padlocked the Ivar Street offices for failure to pay taxes. All of this was allegedly Grillo's fault. For a man Brian had once called "one of the family," things had gotten very unpleasant.

Derek Taylor explained that the Beach Boys were always "very aware of and very silly with money. And they all needed it . . . huge spenders. Nick Grillo," Taylor felt, "was in the hottest seat in the world. I never saw a man under more pressure than Nick Grillo in my life. There were so many of them, first of all." The four corporate Beach Boys were all "buying, selling cars, houses, whatever. And all changing their minds. God, for mind changing . . . Nick Grillo, a work freak . . . poor Nick . . . never a complaint. Nick thought whatever he did for them or whatever sort of hell he went through, that the reward was somewhere in heaven." It was always OK, whatever the Beach Boys did, because "it's just the boys, y'know boys will be boys."

Grillo himself gave one example of what he had to deal with in describing an idea of Mike Love's that centered around a floating hospital in the shape of a pyramid off the coast of Florida. Grillo, however, refused to say anything else about the Beach Boys because they've already been through one lawsuit together.

With Rieley leading the way, the Beach Boys continued to build goodwill, playing benefit concerts and making a triumphant return to the Fillmore East. That was April 27, 1971, when they jammed with the Grateful Dead. It was really a great move. The Dead are the ongoing symbol of San Francisco, and appearing with them was like the Dead's saying, "Hey, these guys are alright. They make good music, and they're pretty cool. Forget your old prejudices. These are the new Beach Boys." As one reporter noted, in the middle of the performance, Bob Dylan said to Jack Rieley, "You know, they're fucking good, man."

The group followed this show with a May Day appearance at an anti-war demonstration in Washington, D.C., the only major group to show up. People were shaking their heads in disdain when it was announced that the Beach Boys were going to play. After all, the Beach Boys at an anti-war rally? There were also ecstatic reactions to their performance. It didn't hurt that the group was doing a formative version of "Student Demonstration Time," a song based on "Riot in Cell Block Number Nine."

All of a sudden, the Beach Boys were relevant. They played a benefit for the Berrigan Brothers' defense fund and appeared at the closing night of the Fillmore East. The Fillmore's founding owner, rock impressario Bill Graham, introduced the Beach Boys by saying, "There are very few groups that have had more influence on what is going down today than this one. I really don' know of any." In the summer of '71, a TV special, "Good Vibrations from Central Park," featured the Beach Boys.

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Opposite top, the Beach Boys in Central Park, New York City, 1971. Above, the Beach Boys at the Whisky. From a 1971 interview, Bruce Johnston: "The Who and the Beach Boys have discussed making an album together. . . ."

CHUCK PULIN

Through all of this, however, the Beach Boys' basic problem hadn't really changed. In the late sixties, they had been put down for playing all the oldies, but at the same time, the concert audiences were demanding to hear the hits. There were frequent cursing and shouting matches between the audience and Mike Love. With the new acceptance of the Beach Boys in the seventies, the group was faced with the dilemma of how many oldies to play. The audiences that they were now attracting were split between the remnants of the long-time fan cult and the brand-new fans who were college-aged and came to hear the hits because they'd never bothered to see the Beach Boys when they were growing up. The latter group of fans wanted nostalgia, and there were some depressing nights when their cries for "Help Me Rhonda" drowned out the applause for "Caroline No." The audiences had an amazing effect on the Beach Boys in those days. If the crowd was attentive and appreciative of the newer material, the group gave out a positive energy that made all the songs sound better. On the nights when the rowdies disrupted the show, the band would shorten the program, leave out some of the slower songs, play the hits, and get out of town.

Above, An album ad that may be an elaborate hoax by someone in the Warner Brothers art department or an entire Beach Boys LP that is hidden away on a shelf other than the tape library at Brother Studio. Side One: "Big 'T' Water," "I Was Born in Kentucky," "Sally (Was A Gentle Woman)," "Sneakin' In the Backdoor Of Love," and "Statue Of A Fool," Side Two: "Mountain High," "Long Lonesome Highway," "Tie Me To Your Apron Strings," "There's Been A Change In Me," and "Sing That Song Again."

It was probably at Jack Rieley's insistence that the program stayed in its long form. It was a true joy to hear "Wonderful" or "Let the Wind Blow," but a time was coming when the shouts for "Surfin' U.S.A." would win out. In 1971 and 1972, however, the group was committed to creating a new audience by playing the more recent material.

The recording of the *Surf's Up* album was the first false start in the group's resurgence. Brian's involvement was minimal. In fact, the album was initially titled *Landlocked*, but it was changed after a battle within the group resulted in the inclusion of the song "Surf's Up." That *Smile* jewel was put on the LP against Brian's wishes, and Bruce Johnston remembers that the entire album was designed to fool the public into thinking that Brian was part of the group. "I think it was sort of a sham, not intentional. I felt that Jack Rieley had to make us look like a unit to pull us in a direction he was pulling us." Besides Brian's unhappiness, another internal feud resulted in Dennis's not having any songs on the album, one reason that the record isn't nearly as strong as *Sunflower*.

The vocal arrangements on *Surf's Up* weren't as full as those on *Sunflower*

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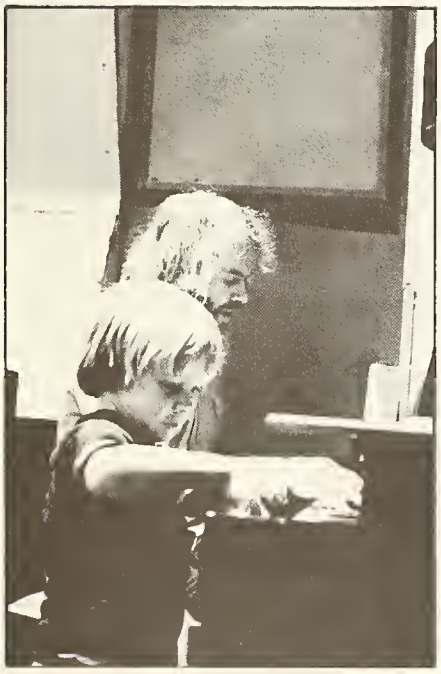

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either, and that is mostly because Brian wasn't working on the album. Bruce recalls, "It was strange to be doing vocal arrangements to make it sound like the Beach Boys when we were the Beach Boys. That's a little weird to me."

The resurrection of the song "Surf's Up" is a confusing tale. Part of the album track was from a recording Brian had made for the 1967 Leonard Bernstein special; other segments were recorded in 1971 to fit in with the old track. Bruce: "I remember thinking, 'Well, if I voice this chord into Brian's part from the end of Carl's part, it'll sound okay and no one will know about it.' We ended up doing vocals to sort of emulate ourselves without Brian Wilson, which was kind of silly.

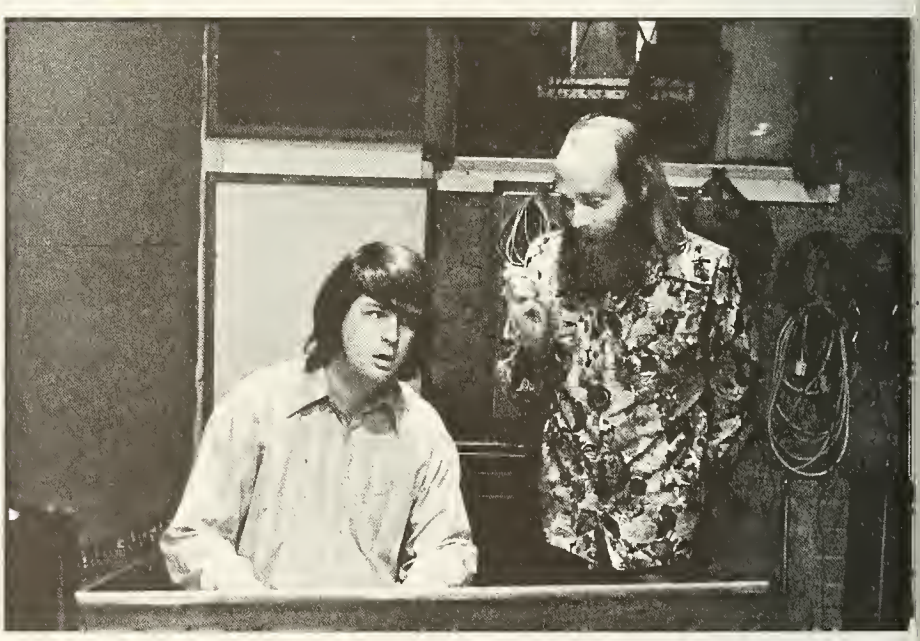
"And yet, the last great Brian Wilson song was on that album. "'Til I Die." I remember Brian playing it for the band and one member of the band didn't understand it and put it down, and Brian just decided not to show it to us for a few months. He just put it away. I mean, he was absolutely crushed. This other person just didn't like it, but Brian cut it anyway. I think that song was pretty meaningful in expressing where he was at that point in time. I think it's his heaviest song, even though I'm probably wrong."

I'm a leaf on a windy day
Pretty soon I'll be blown away
How long will the wind blow
Until I Die ©

Heartbreakingly performed, beautifully arranged, this song was an artistic triumph, like the best of *Pet Sounds*, a window into Brian's heart and soul. The offered glimpse is quite sad, and it was the last time a Beach Boys album would include a Brian Wilson song that so openly expressed his emotions.

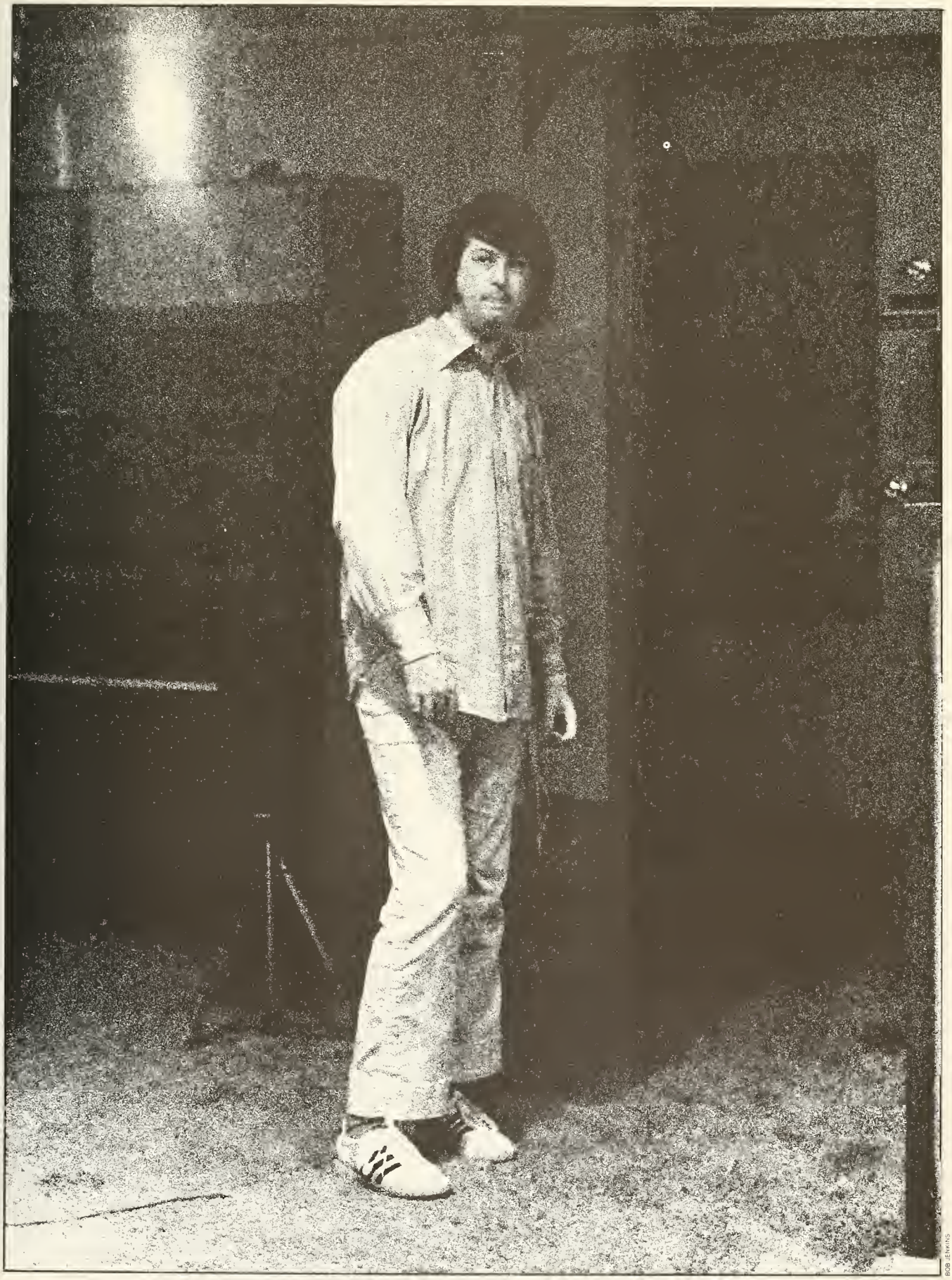
The title song was all that the *Smile* legend had promised and maybe a little more, and it was when a song like "Surf's Up" was finally released that one could really begin to understand what the collapse of *Smile* had cost the world of music.

The one cut on the album that defies explanation is "A Day in the Life of a Tree," which features an unexpected lead vocal by Jack Rieley as well as a guest appearance by Van Dyke Parks. Ben Edmonds: "Now, that probably was one of Brian's classic put-ons. 'Cause I remember Jack Rieley telling me after he did the vocal that he went into the booth and Brian was crying. 'Was so choked



These pictures were taken in Brian's Bel-Air home studio. Bottom left, Al and his son Matthew. Above left, Brian and his beagle Banana. Banana reportedly will play catch with you until your patience is long past.

© 1971 by Brian Wilson, Brother Publishing Co



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up.' *You* listen to it. How can anyone get choked up listening to that with anything but laughter." The vocal does have an oddly appealing, sensitive quality. As one friend of Brian's theorized, Brian was "choked up" because "he really related to the song. It was about him."

The rest of the album was marred by musical inconsistency and pseudo-important Jack Rieley lyrics. Bruce's "Disney Girls" was a perfect piece of pop, and Carl's work showed his emerging composing and producing talents, but the triteness of the themes expressed in the ecology and anti-war songs was almost embarrassing. The group's sudden relevancy was hard to take for many who had observed the Beach Boys' basic political silence over the years. Few knew that Carl had been a draft resister before that was common. 1971, though, was a turning point in the entire "counter-culture revolution" and the Beach Boys would be caught up in the eventual return to nostalgia that followed Vietnam and Watergate.

The *Surf's Up* album did quite well for the group, critically and commercially, especially in light of the *Sunflower* debacle. The Beach Boys, though, were going in different directions, which created a basic instability within the band that has lasted to this day. Dennis was constantly quitting or getting fired and then rejoining. He was in a movie, *Two Lane Blacktop,* with James Taylor; he'd stopped drumming due to a hand injury suffered during a drunken temper tantrum and was giving serious consideration to a solo career. In December of 1970 he released a solo record in England with Daryl Dragon; by February of '71, both he and Bruce were talking of doing solo albums, talk that continued for five years before seeing fruition. In late '71, the Beach Boys, on the verge of a new success, were in danger of losing their sex symbol (Dennis), and his leave-takings would continue throughout the decade. For that matter, all the members of the group periodically quit.

The one member who never wanted to leave the band was ultimately let go in the spring of 1972. An Earl Leaf gossip column noted that "On the seventh anniversary of attaining his official status as a Beach Boy, guitarman Bruce Johnston got the axe. Carl Wilson, Mike Love and Al Jardine voted unanimously to drop him from the group due to hostile vibes his lifeways caused them." Bruce claims that he left the group by mutual consent, but regardless of how "mutual" the decision was, there is no question that it was Jack Rieley who forced Bruce out of the group. Bruce: "I don't know if he was trying to get rid of me; I think he was just trying to redirect a band." Ben Edmonds notes, "Bruce was the one member of the group that was beginning to have some doubts about Jack Rieley's intentions. And at that time, I seem to remember people pointing to the fact that he was the one Beach Boy who didn't meditate and wasn't a vegetarian and wasn't part of their lifestyle. Whether that was just the official line or the reality of the situation, I don't know. Bruce was definitely the one who most clearly saw exactly what Jack Rieley was up to." Although this is not one of Bruce's favorite topics of discussion, he does credit Rieley. "All I can say is that at the beginning, I thought what he was trying to do was absolutely right on the money. He helped the band become aware of what our niche was in pop music."

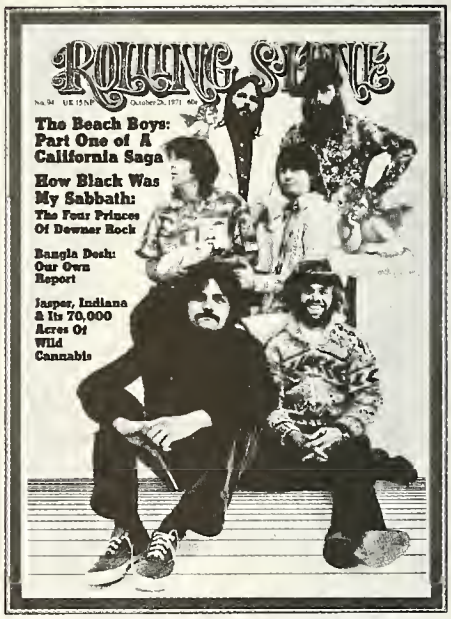
Many of the group's employees and entourage hadn't liked Rieley from the beginning, and one office worker reportedly hired a private detective who found out that Rieley had never worked for NBC, won the Pulitzer Prize, or done anything else he'd claimed. His actual background allegedly showed a lack of stability.

One humorous note in the Jack Rieley affair is that Brian and Jack's friendship only lasted a few weeks before Brian got bored with Jack. As Ben Edmonds recalls, "Even when the rest of them were apparently being fooled by his [Rieley's] come-on, Brian really knew what was going on. Brian made up a little song called 'Is Jack Rieley Really Superman?' So Brian knew what was going on. But at that point in time, he obviously had no desire to control the situation."

It was Rieley who was in control, and he was still making the right career moves even if his intentions weren't pure. Ben Edmonds remembers that "Jack saw Brian as being one of the big keys to reviving the Beach Boys. Which was an extension of Derek Taylor's 'Brian Wilson Is a Genius' hype. For which I can't fault Derek because at that time he meant very well. Unfortunately, it's been one of those things that has come back to haunt Brian like a curse. At the time, it certainly seemed valid, and Derek, bless his heart, was certainly doing his job as a press agent.

"I think that Jack Rieley saw an extension of that as being very critical to bringing the Beach Boys back. Which was very correct. Because the whole playing on the Brian Wilson mythology, whether it be for that point in time or for 1976, has always been crucial to manipulating the Beach Boys."

The Brian Wilson legend was reborn in the fall of 1971 with a two-part article



in *Rolling Stone* called "The Beach Boys: A California Saga." Writers Tom Nolan and David Felton managed to capture all the bizarre elements of the group's history and, at the same time, concentrated on the legend of *Smile* and its lost glories. Combined with the group's growing appeal as a concert attraction and the success of the *Surf's Up* album, the Beach Boys were firmly on their way back. If it involved exploiting Brian and dredging up a lot of bad memories, so be it. The Beach Boys came first.

Brian was well aware of that feeling, and he wanted less and less to do with the group. He had expressed it in his music, ("'Til I Die"), but the family

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seemed to ignore his feelings. They had come to tolerate Brian's eccentric behavior. One observer feels that the family was totally "condescending in their love and support. They were giving off feelings like, 'Considering how messed up you are, you're OK,' Instead of saying, 'Brian, you're OK, but these things bother me,' they say, 'Brian, you're not OK, but this thing here is nice about you.' If you love him, then he is OK. They were communicating that you're a lovable person in spite of yourself." That same observer recalls the tremendous hurting that was going on between the brothers. "Brian would hurt them, not by being a mean person, but by copping out, backing down from his commitments. They would strike back at him, not understanding that he was having trouble keeping a commitment to himself, let alone anyone else."

According to this long-time friend of Brian's, "He wasn't always communicating with them what was bothering him. But even when he did, they ignored him and passed it off as his crazy behavior. At that point, Brian's eccentricities didn't seem to be hurting anybody, except himself.

"Brian was crying out for help," this friend recalls, "but nobody was really sure whether he meant it or not." Another observer remembers that even Brian's suicide threats became a joke, like the time he touched off a mad dash by announcing that he planned to drive his Rolls-Royce off the Santa Monica Pier and into the Pacific Ocean. That got some attention. Brian was even rumored to have once dug a grave in the backyard; he wasn't being subtle, but somehow, it was all tolerated. Brian's actions have always been hard to understand and there are only a handful of people who are able to discern whether he is playing games or being serious.

Because Brian didn't relate to the Beach Boys' situation, he created a new world of friends, much like the people he had surrounded himself with during the *Smile* era. Danny Hutton (a founding member of Three Dog Night) and Van Dyke Parks were still around from the old days and Tandyn Almer (he wrote "Along Comes Mary") had been added to this circle of far-out creators. In 1970

JASPER DAILEY

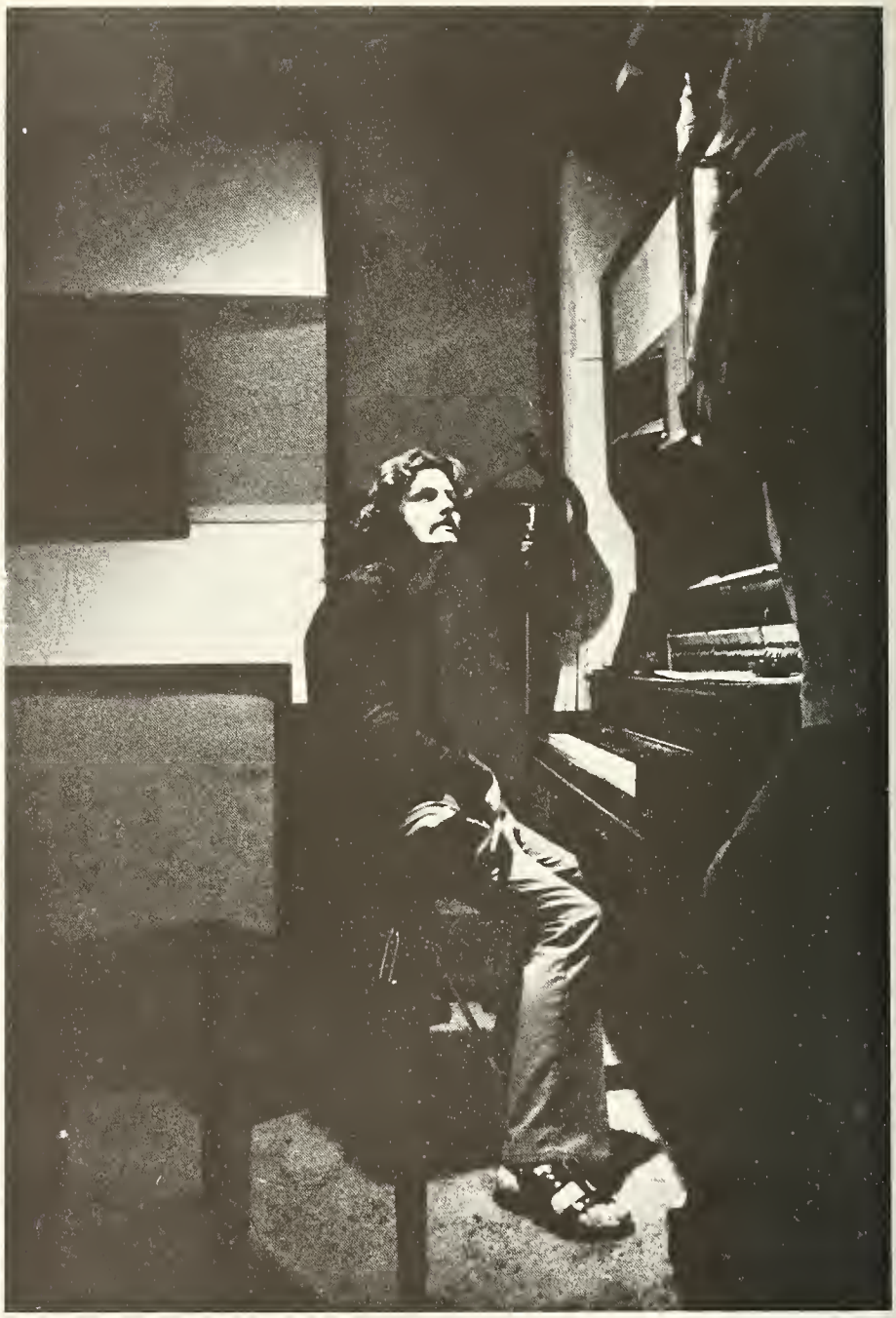
Opposite, "Lady" was the flip side of "Sound of Free." Daryl Dragon remained anonymous as Rumbo. Left, Tandyn Almer. Above, the man in the mask is Billy Hinsche. Dennis missed this Halloween 1971 session at Brian's house. Carl and Brian have make-up on. The costumes got the group in the mood to record a special Halloween message that was to be mailed to radio stations but apparently never was.

and 1971, Brian wasn't a recluse. He could be found at his health food store, or at the Troubadour bar, or at one of two health food restaurants, "H.E.L.P." or "The Source." Brian wasn't especially happy, but at least he had friends whom he could trust and people to hang-out with. Besides that, these people didn't care whether Brian would have five songs ready for the next album. They liked Brian Wilson, the person, not Brian Wilson, the Beach Boy. These people and others became Brian's family.

In the early 1970s, Brian was reportedly getting kicked out of the house or just leaving for days at a time. One member of Brian's new entourage remembers that "Marilyn got up at six in the morning, made breakfast, and ran the house, took care of the kids and all that. Brian got up at six in the evening and went off to his own separate world. Marilyn had no idea what Brian was into."

One interesting trait of Brian's is that he always dominates whatever situation he is part of, even when he is not overtly exerting his influence. When he chooses to lead actively, he can be incredibly forceful and decisive. Brian constantly enjoys the power trip of testing his friends' commitment, often coaxing them into taking part in one of his unusual activities, which are often bizarre mind games. The irony of such happenings was that Brian's friends would be blamed by the family for being a bad influence on Brian and always getting him into trouble, when quite the reverse was true. Consequently, these friends were never welcome at the Wilson house.

Musically, Brian's dwindling output found a new outlet with the re-formation of his wife's singing group. This time, it was just Marilyn and her sister Diane, and they were called Spring. Ben Edmonds says, "A lot of people have different points of view on the whole Spring trip. I mean, some people will tell you it's a situation where Marilyn and Diane bullied him into it. And he was doing it out of a sense of obligation. Other people will tell you he was really into it. The only thing I can ever recall Brian saying about his wife was that she was a great singer, one of the great singers, and he was going to let everybody know that." Brian's production skill has always been such that he can make most anybody sound good. Although Marilyn is an adequate background singer, her lead vocals are at best pleasant.


BOB JENKINS

Spring (later changed to "American Spring" to avoid legal hassles) secured a contract with United Artists Records. David Sandler, the newest arrival in the Wilson camp, went to work with Brian on the *Spring* LP. It should be noted that Sandler's contribution to the album and the subsequent single on Columbia was greater than Brian's. Sandler's talent for singing and producing in Brian Wilson's style is remembered as remarkable by observers—some people couldn't tell the difference. The *Spring* album has become a cult favorite, probably because the production and the background vocal arrangements were so good. Even if Brian's involvement wasn't as great as the publicity surrounding the record led listeners to believe, it still served as a reminder that Brian's skills were intact.

Brian and David Sandler were also planning another album (without Spring), and they even talked about it with Warner Brothers Records.

In early '72, Blondie Chaplin and Ricky Fataar (both formerly of the Flame) were officially made Beach Boys. The first album they worked on, *Carl and the Passions–So Tough*, was a disjointed affair, definitely the result of the Beach Boys' recording in three different studios

at once—Dennis Wilson and Daryl Dragon in one, Carl, Mike, and Al at another studio, and Blondie and Ricky at a third. Brian's involvement in the recording of this album was virtually invisible; Brian called it phantom singing. There is evidence to suggest that Brian refused to pose for a group picture, and the inside album photo was skillfully put together to make Brian appear to be one of the group.

Brian's musical contribution was the smallest he's made to any of the Beach Boys albums in their entire career. He only wrote two songs, but now, a new wrinkle had been added. Jack Rieley was changing Brian's lyrics. "You Need a Mess of Help to Stand Alone" was written by Brian and Tandyn Almer; it was originally titled "Beatrice from Baltimore." The original lyrics included this verse:

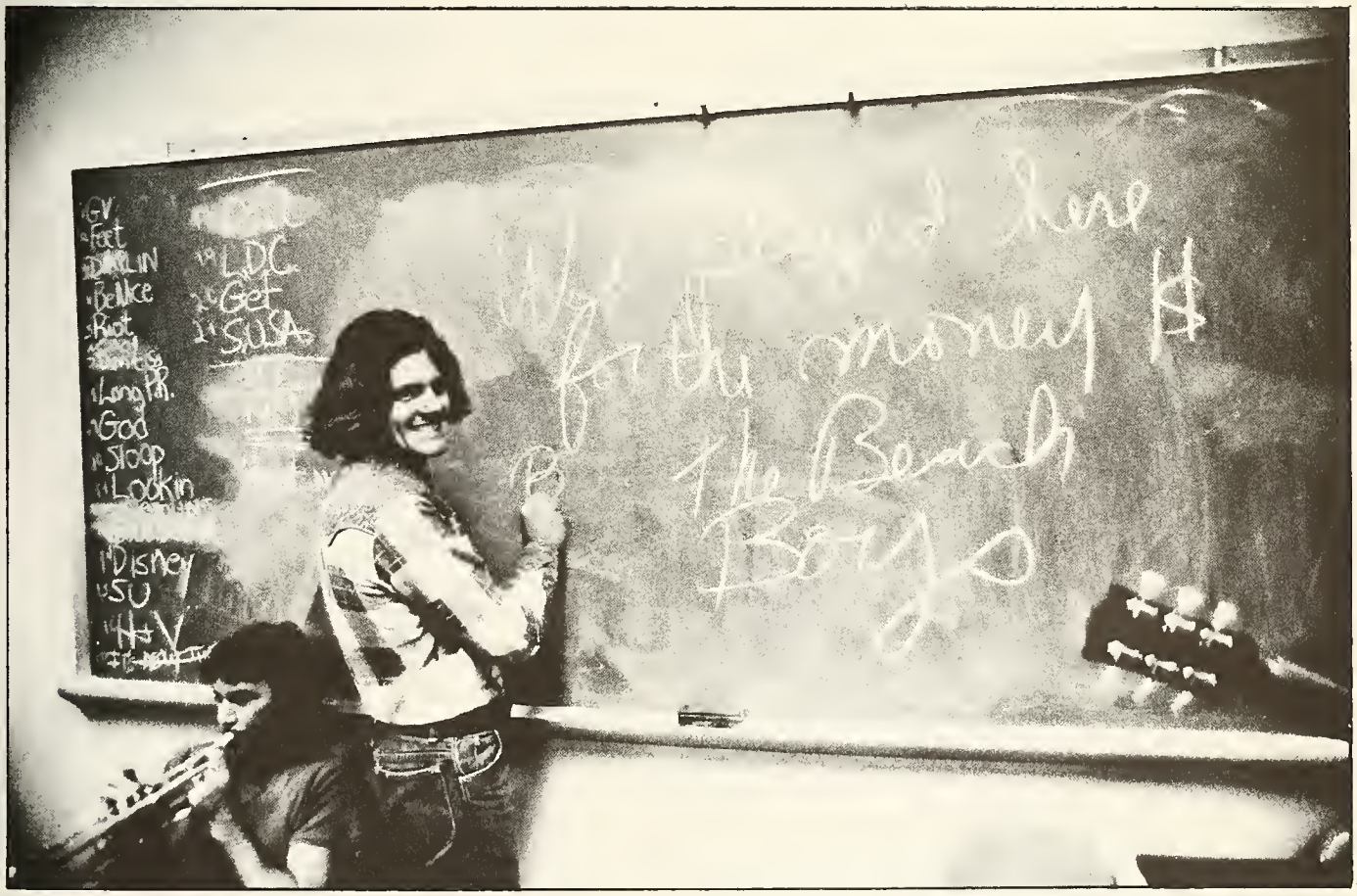
She got a hole in her stockin'
She do a whole lot of rockin'
She do the shake down at Bumbles
She do the Chi-ca-no rumble

Rieley decided to write a new set of lyrics that would make the song more "relevant" and "hip sounding."

Brian's other song, "Marcella," was about a masseuse who had been an understanding friend to Brian. In those days, Brian had taken to frequenting massage parlors for human contact. And despite all that had transpired through the years, Brian still managed to get himself into funny situations, often unintentionally. Dean Torrence says that "Brian has always been funny

CHUCK PULIN

Opposite and below, Bruce. Above, A very large collection of Beach Boys: Al, Dennis, Carl, Bruce, Ricky, Blondie, and Mike. Bruce Johnston: "I feel like I'm the Albert Speer of the Beach Boys in that I'm technically innocent of any of the bizarre elements of that band."



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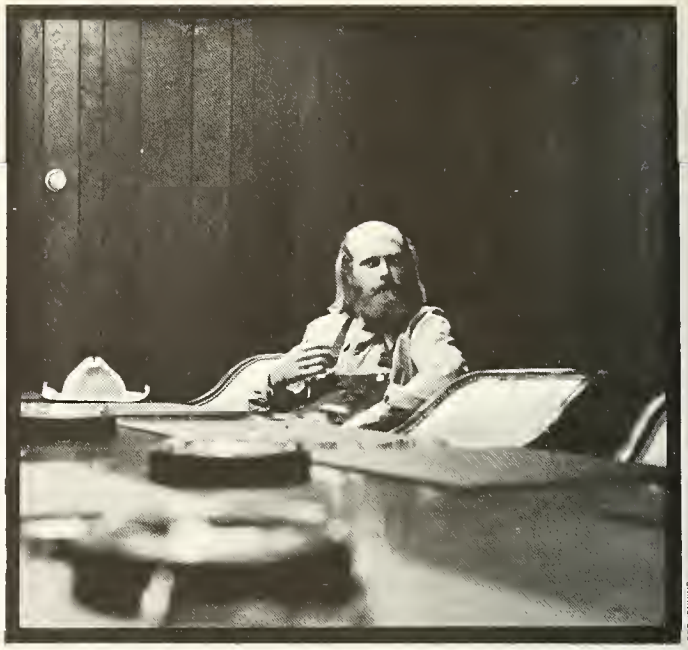

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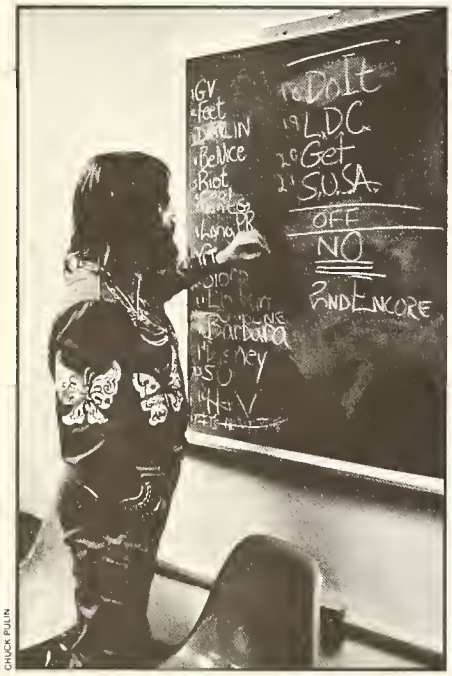

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to me visually, a walk or an expression. Sometimes I just look at him and crack up. He used to tell me seriously about something that would make me laugh. He used to tell me about a massage parlor he used to go to. He couldn't figure out why they treated him so poorly just because he was walking along in a hallway and tripped in a hole in the rug and fell into this room and scared the girl and whoever she was 'massaging.' And they kicked him out. He said all this with a real straight face, and I'm just dying."

Reportedly, "Marcella" was also rewritten so that it wouldn't sound like Brian had been hanging out in massage parlors. Despite those lyrical changes, it is the one true "Beach Boys" song on the record. It is a fine tune, even if it didn't receive much attention as a single.

Another problem for *So Tough* was that it was released in a package with *Pet Sounds*, and it could only suffer in comparison. That coupling helped make *So Tough* seem like the Beach Boys' worst album ever. Long-time Beach Boys fans were incensed that two of the eight cuts were by "outsiders" (Blondie and Ricky), and nobody was particularly stimulated by the preachy tone of the TM tunes.

The addition of Blondie and Ricky did add a new, very soulful dimension to the Beach Boys' records and concerts, but the purists were offended by their presence and recoiled at the sound of Blondie Chaplin singing "WildHoney." It was certainly different. In fact, Blondie's voice was a welcome addition to the Beach Boys, and his vocal on "Sail on Sailor" made that song one of the best records the group released in the 1970s.

Opposite, on the road, fall 1971. Bottom row (from left to right): Carl works out that night's program; Daryl Dragon with Dennis; Carl with Toni Tennille (in 1972). Below, the Beach Boys film their 1972 TV Special, "Good Vibrations from London." Pictured from left to right: Al, Dennis Dragon, Carl, and Elton John. Behind Elton are Billy Hinsche, Ricky Fataar, and Mike. Dennis Dragon is Daryl's brother.

Brian Wilson, entering one of the worst periods of his life, received the unwelcome news that the group had decided to record their next album in Holland, and like it or not, Brian was going along. For a man who really was only at home when he was at home, the trip was not something to look forward to. As Audree Wilson remembers, "Brian didn't want to go to Holland. He didn't leave when everybody left."

The story of how Brian finally got there was recounted in the group's Holland booklet which was a history of the entire project. According to that tale, Brian's trip was "a miasma of false starts and silences. His wife, kids, and housekeeper went over first. Twice, Brian got as far as the airport and turned back. The third time, he appeared to get on the plane. A phone call went through to Amsterdam to confirm it. But three hours after the plane landed, there was still no sign of him. A search of the aircraft yielded Brian's ticket and passport, abandoned on his seat. Oblivious to the panic, Brian shuffled off the plane and fell asleep on a couch in the duty-free lounge, where he eventually was found."

The one point that this story glosses over is that the family went over without

COURTESY OF PETER KANZE

Brian and left him behind. As Audree Wilson remembers, "My opinion on seeing Brian was that he wasn't thrilled with Holland. He was there, but I think he would have preferred to be home."

The Holland trip was a Jack Rieley idea, and with Carl's support, the group made plans to spend a number of months abroad, touring and recording a new album. The whole affair was disrupted by the ineptness that has frequently marked the Beach Boys management. In Holland, they couldn't find housing in a central location, so everybody was scattered over a large area. Then, the group learned that there was no studio that could accommodate their demands for time, so the Beach Boys had an entire studio built in Los Angeles and flown over piece by piece to Holland where it was reassembled. The stay in Holland, what with the studio costs and living expenses for dozens of family, friends, and staff, ran into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. To top it all off, when the group submitted *Holland* to Warner Brothers, it was rejected for lack of a strong single. That caused more than a bit of grief.

Holland, like its predecessor, was a disjointed album because the songwriting chores were shared by so many people. This time, however, the quality of the songs and the more involved production made *Holland* a successful effort, but not before Warners and the group fought a bloody battle. Ultimately, a fairly dismal song, "We Got Love," was replaced by the album's real gem, Brian's "Sail on Sailor."

"Sail on Sailor" has a curious history, and there are several "definitive" versions of the birth of the song. Regardless of its origins, it is known that Jack Rieley again added his own lyrics which were used in place of some of the original lyrics.

"Sail on Sailor" wasn't the only creative stumbling block for Brian on the *Holland* album. While in Holland, Brian had written a bizarre fairy tale, inspired by Randy Newman's *Sail Away* album. Although the musical segments are short, they have a power that was missing from the rest of the album. The music comes from that faraway place that Brian has always gone to for his special sounds. The group, however, was not prepared for the fairy tale's length and refused to put it on the album. A compromise was reached, and it was included as a special 7-inch bonus record with the *Holland* album. Recently, Brian developed the "Pied Piper" theme into an entire song, "Lazy Lizzie," and it is exceptionally good.

The fairy tale itself was another statement from Brian Wilson as to his current situation. He knew that he had retreated into something of a fairy-tale world out of a sense of self-preservation. The story line is about a prince who had a magic transistor radio, and how the prince had trouble hearing the music from the radio. The not-very-hidden meaning of the story touched on Brian's family difficulties, and Brian's problems in creating music. Metaphorically, the magic transistor could be considered Brian's muse, and he was telling the world that he was having trouble tuning into his station.

Following the financial debacle that was Holland, the Beach Boys realized that maybe Jack Rieley wasn't all he was supposed to be. Carl went to Amsterdam where Rieley had remained and fired him. Despite all the claims that Rieley took advantage of the group, his contribution should never be underestimated. Ben Edmonds, himself a victim of Rieley's false promises, puts Jack's efforts into perspective. "As much of a liar and a possible crook, or whatever Jack Rieley might have been, he was also responsible for bringing the Beach Boys back out of obscurity, something that they could never have done themselves. They never had the kind of direction and guidance to be able to really do it. They have always had to depend on outside sources to keep them in contact with the real world.

"Al Jardine," Edmonds remembers, "so believed in Jack Rieley that Jardine

ED ROACH

Above left, Blondie and Al. Above right, Daryl Dragon is at the wheel. Below, Mike plays the theremin onstage, Birmingham, England, 1972.

ROBERT ELLIS

once claimed. 'Well, I suppose that we have some talent, but I just don't know where we'd be without Jack Rieley.' He had duped them to the extent that Alan was obviously reflecting the group's attitude that they owed it to Jack Rieley. Which on one level is true but on another level is absurd. However Jack Rieley may have misled them and used them, or whatever, you still can't deny that he was responsible for the 1971 resurgence of the Beach Boys. He did engineer that. There are probably a lot of negative things that people have to say about Jack Rieley, my own included, but you also have to give him credit where credit is due. He pulled it off very well. He made a place for the Beach Boys again, and you can't take that away from him.''

In Holland, Brian's depression deepened, and his weight, which had been an occasional problem, began to rise out of control. To Brian's always fragile ego, this heaviness made him publicly unacceptable, so, once he had returned home, he tended to remain behind the closed doors of his Bel-Air mansion.

Brian was unable to record at home. Marilyn had removed the home studio because she wanted to live a more ''normal'' life and not be in the middle of a constant traffic jam of musicians and recordmakers. To Brian, this was a devastating blow. As Brian later noted, ''If I could have anything in the world, I'd have a studio in my house again. That's the one thing I want more than *anything*!''

Because of his weight problem, Brian didn't like to travel to a studio in Hollywood, so his recording ambitions were effectively stymied. Tandyn Almer, one of Brian's closest friends at this point, sincerely felt that Brian needed help. One friend of both Tandyn's and Brian's remembered that Tandyn ''encouraged Brian to see a psychiatrist. The family wouldn't hear of it.'' Tandyn eventually got Brian to meet a well-known Los Angeles psychiatrist, as this friend recalls, ''and he refused to treat Brian as an out-patient because he said that it was 'his environment that is his problem.' '' ''The family,'' another friend of Brian notes, ''wouldn't even admit that there was a problem. It was like an alcoholic that people ignore. The whole Beach Boys trip revolved around their closing their eyes to Brian's problems. Brian was part of the woodwork, like a retarded child that everyone ignored.'' While it may be true that the family would ignore Brian's problems, it is important to understand that illness isn't easy for any family to accept. With Brian, nobody was ever quite sure how sick he was. Also, it should be noted that all the Wilsons were experiencing personal difficulties of one sort or another, and they didn't spend all their time worrying about Brian. Their concern may not have appeared on the surface, because in order to survive in a household or a family business with a ''sick'' person, it is sometimes necessary to ignore that person. That doesn't mean that each and every one of the Wilsons wasn't heartbroken to watch Brian's difficulties. The Wilsons may have lacked understanding of his situation, but there was plenty of compassion, particularly from Dennis and Carl.

Their treatment of Brian's friends,

Below, recording vocals. Pictured from left to right, Marilyn, Brian, Diane, and Dean Torrence.

DAVID HILLER

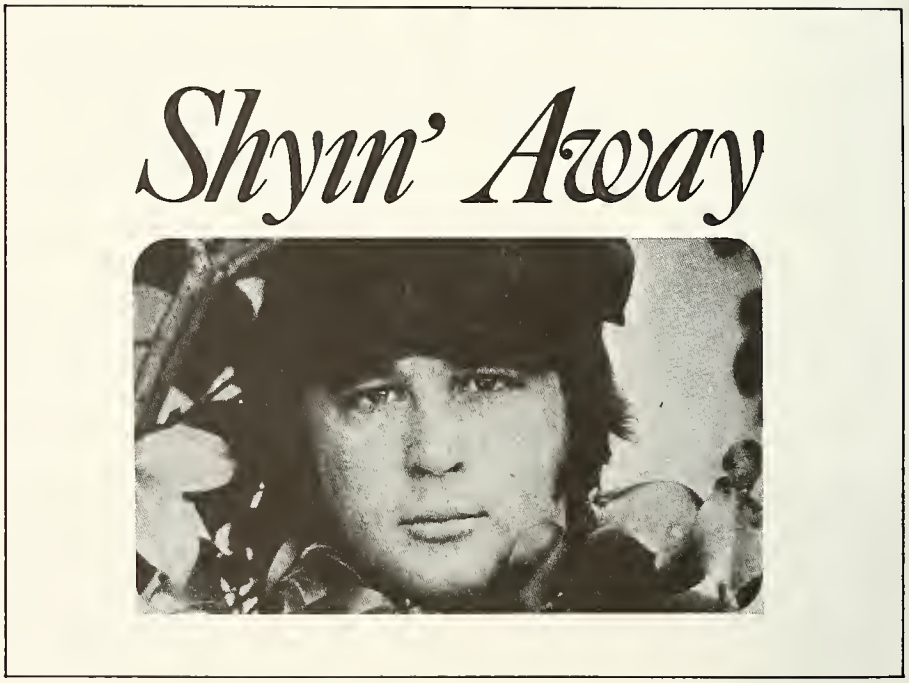
though, wasn't the least bit gracious or understanding. As one of those friends recalls, "The family thought that Tandyn and Danny and Van Dyke and all the others were crazy." To an objective viewer, that was a reasonable conclusion, but this other friend points out that "Brian's friends got Brian actively interested in creating, thinking, writing. They could make Brian sane sometimes, but everybody resented them." Their resentment didn't center around the creative area. As one observer put it, "Brian and Tandyn explored new realms of eccentricity together." A close friend of Brian's called Tandyn evil and says that on balance "I think he damaged Brian."

The next event shook the entire family: Murry Wilson died of a heart attack on June 4, 1973. Audree Wilson remembers that "Brian was extremely upset when Murry died. It was very hard on him." It was so hard that Brian left town. As Audree recalls, "Carl said something like a leading remark about Brian, and I said, 'What's wrong?' And he said, 'I'm really pissed at Brian; he went to New York.' And I said 'It's okay, Carl. He can't handle it. I really totally understand. He just can't handle it. And the first thing he could think of was to go pretty far away.'"

Diane Rovell was dispatched to New York to bring Brian back, but before they returned, Brian dropped by WNEW-FM for a chat with Pete Fornatale, and visited *Record World* magazine for a rare print interview. The visit to WNEW was incredibly strange. Fornatale, who counted Brian as one of his idols, was crushed to meet him finally in his overweight, overwrought shape. Their on-the-air interview was filled with mostly irrelevant chatter about a visit to the zoo (Brian wrote a song about a gorilla, Pattycake, from that trip), and the maids at the Americana Hotel. Brian noted, "They'll get you in trouble every time." There was a hilarious (although perfectly serious) comment from Brian about American Spring's performing on the "Ed Sullivan Show" (which was off the air by 1973). As he made the comment, Brian realized his mistake, and his embarrassed laughter rang out at such volume that it's echoing in the halls of WNEW-FM to this day. Brian did make one comment that was particularly revealing. "My group for the last few years has been American Spring." Brian said it right out. He wasn't a Beach Boy. His comment only hinted at his real feelings.

In the *Record World* magazine interview that took place that afternoon, Brian discussed the impact of Murry's death, and said that since Murry had died, "I feel a lot more ambitious . . . I'm gonna try a little harder now. . . . He died just before we could record one of his tunes, 'Lazzaloo.' . . . And then I got a call that he was gone . . . . It's makin' a man out of me. Makes me want to produce a little more."

Even at this depressing time, Brian's humor shone through. During the WNEW interview, Brian had claimed,



"I've never been a hype . . . but I'll eat my hat, if I had a hat I'd eat it, if that record doesn't really get some kind of action. I'm talking about 'Shyin' Away'" by American Spring. Talking to *Record World* a few hours later, Brian noted, "I said on the air that if people would buy the record, I'd sell my wardrobe. Yeah, my wardrobe, two shirts and a pair of jeans. That's my whole wardrobe."

"My father's dying," Brian would later recall, "had a lot to do with my retreating." For Brian, 1973 was the start of a period in his life that all would like to forget. For the Beach Boys, it was the start of a major resurgence. In '73, the traveling band finally began to reap the financial persistent touring. All the years of playing small, often half-filled school gyms and local auditoriums were paying off in grand style so that by the end of 1973, the group could headline major arenas like Madison Square Garden. At that concert, Bruce Johnston joined the group onstage for the encore. This mini-reunion came about, according to the then road manager Rick Nelson, "because he had always hoped that the Beach Boys would play the Garden, and when they did he wanted to be there. That was one of his goals as a Beach Boy."

The new and growing acceptance of the Beach Boys' music on the concert scene was documented in the December

Spring recorded an album for United Artists and one single (above) for Columbia. Neither one was successful.

'73 release of a two-record live album. It isn't a memorable record, but nobody could ignore the fact that this record of mostly old hits became the group's first gold record for Warner Brothers, even if it took an accounting maneuver to gain it that status.

Nineteen seventy-three was the last year the group struggled financially, but the internal problems raged on. Rick Nelson remembers that Dennis was pretty inactive; "He would just wander around the stage, plink a little piano, stand at the mike. He was lost. There was no musical reason for him to be there except that he was Dennis Wilson." Blondie and Ricky were beginning to tire of playing the Beach Boys' music and not enough of their own.

In those days, though, before the big success of 1974, as Rick Nelson remembers, "They were united then. They had fights, but it was like, 'Here's another shot. Let's make the most of it.' They were actually humble, a little bit. We were traveling coach class, and we were renting cars and everybody had to drive, and we weren't staying in the fanciest hotels. As spoiled as they'd been, that was hard for them to acknowledge that they had to go back a little bit. And they

BOB JENKINS

did it." When they did start on the upswing, "They forgot about [the bad times] real quick."

Money in 1973 (or most any year) ruled the Beach Boys, and Rick Nelson thinks Steve Love (Mike's brother) "was really instrumental in keeping it tight. Economics were the key because they didn't want to blow it all on the road; they wanted to have something left over. Everything was, 'Well let's take this one little step.' In some big cities, we'd get limos. It was a slow transition." The Beach Boys had taken charge of their own business affairs. Rick Nelson recalls, "They insisted on making the money decisions because they wouldn't rely on a manager. It was always interesting to do that because I would have to call them up individually and say, 'Here's the issue, what's the vote?' 'What did Dennis vote?' 'I haven't talked to him.' "'Well, you call him, and then you call me back.'"

The group's live program was also slowly starting to include more of the hits, the result of backstage battles between Carl and Mike. Mike, who is the man who makes the live shows work, knew the impact of the hits. His commercial instincts would be vindicated in 1974, when the Beach Boys had their first number-one record in many, many years.

Above, Steve Love. Below, Deuce Coupe, a ballet by Twyla Tharp, was presented during the Joffrey Company's 1973 spring season in New York. In 1976, the same company presented Deuce Coupe II. Both ballets incorporated the music of the Beach Boys.

Murry Wilson

Brian Wilson: "The biggest figure of authority is the parent. I had an extreme experience of living with an authoritative father. It's enabled me to see the injustice authority creates. The teen-ager's scapegoat existence sort of proves that there is a great lack of communication between young people and adults. Their [adults'] antagonism [towards their children] basically is a misunderstanding of themselves. It's awfully easy for them to come home from work and to jump on and annihilate teen-agers emotionally just to get rid of the anxieties, failures and frustrations of the day. They feel the necessity of taking them out on someone who isn't in a position to fight back.

"I had a real struggle when I was a kid. I used to think my folks were pretty much out-of-it, didn't even know where-it-was-at. But how are you going to tell your parents where it's at? . . . When they're out feeding you . . . and meanwhile you're going to be the first one to eat all the ice cream. I'd like to see the day when parents and teen-agers can just get along with each other . . why don't they like each other?"

That mid-60s plea from Brian was the result of growing up with Murry Wilson as his father. Murry had a multi-faceted personality. He could be a brutal parent, a dedicated manager, a "man of the world," a generous and thoughtful friend, or an inconsiderate and relentless adversary. As father of the Beach Boys, it was Murry's drive that instilled a competitive force within Brian that fostered his desire and need to succeed. Brian feels that it was Murry's attitude of, "Don't slough off, get in there and fight" that taught him a lot. One associate of Murry's noted that Murry was very "Bomb Hanoi-ish." According to Brian, Murry said, "'If you're going to do it, do it good.' He didn't believe in half-way business. Of course, we learned this from him and it's helped us out."

Though his methods were sometimes crude, Murry did instill a sense of pride in his sons and eventually in the Beach Boys. The group needed that; they were just kids when it began. Sometimes, they would curse offstage (or on), and Murry would fine them for swearing and teach them that this was unprofessional. According to numerous reports, Murry often taught the Beach Boys with physical and verbal abuse. Audree Wilson remembers that "Murry was a taskmaster; he really was. He was tough. I used to think he was too tough, but I tend to be very easy."

Gary Usher recalls that "Murry and I didn't get along especially well. I was constantly getting in Murry's way, and I opposed a lot of his ideas. I would influence Brian in ways that would take him away from his father's thinking, and to Murry that was high treason. He'd like to shoot traitors, I'm sure." When it came to Murry's treatment of his sons and the other Beach Boys, Usher notes that, "He was doing what he thought was right for the boys, driven by an incredible energy source. He truly believed that everything he did was right for the boys. He tried to teach them to be men the only way he knew how. The sons were a little bit more sophisticated. Murry's philosophy was 'aim high, and if you miss low, you're still higher than a lot of people.' So he would push as hard as he could for those kids, even though it may have been clumsy and it may not have been up to

the standards of those days, somehow it worked. Even though he sometimes had bad judgment in the way he conducted himself, the train still went forward. Strange combination of energies."

As Bruce Johnston recalls, "Murry was kind of like a set of jumper cables. He'd get it rolling, but that's as far as he would go; yet he'd keep sending current in, which would be the wrong current, but he would get it started."

From the very beginning of their career, Murry was there to make sure things went right; even when his way clashed with what everyone else wanted, Murry persevered . . . until the Beach Boys finally fired him. At the start, though, Murry was in charge. According to Bruce Johnston, Murry "had a thing about making sure that the guys sounded high in terms of pitch, because it sounded young. If you listen to "Surfin'," that was sped up to make the guys sound younger. He didn't want them to start their careers sounding like old men. He was right there. Murry is a lot like Dennis; they both operate more on feel."

Murry's creative talent as a composer and a record producer was not responsible for the Beach Boys' success. Gary Usher remembers that Murry's "musical tastes were from a little before our time." Murry's music was pure schmaltz, sentimental and romantic, sometimes overblown and melodramatic. That style was out of fashion by the early 1960s, and the Beach Boys were definitely a rock 'n' roll group, not a big band. All that, however, did not prevent a crossover into Brian's and eventually Dennis's music. The emotional intensity of Beach Boys' music, as a reflection of Murry's personality, helped make the "hit records" powerful enough to survive the years, even though much of the lyrical content is by now irrelevant. "Surfer Girl" still works. There is an emotional, almost spiritual quality about Brian's music that transcends lyrical banality. *Pet Sounds* is as emotion-packed today as it was a dozen years ago, maybe more so in light of what Brian has been through. Dennis Wilson recalls that Murry would cry like the Cowardly Lion from *The Wizard of Oz* when he would hear certain chords or Brian's singing on songs like "Caroline, No."

Murry's fights with Capitol Records on the Beach Boys' behalf had an immeasurable effect on the group's career. While Murry's persistence kept the people at Capitol alert, the possibility exists that Capitol may have grudgingly complied with Murry's demands, and at the same time, only half-heartedly performed those tasks. One unsubstantiated report claims that when Murry insisted on putting out his own album, Capitol finally submitted but buried the expense of the record in the Beach Boys' accounts. Effectively, this source claims, the Beach Boys paid for Murry's album. When the Beach Boys' hit-making machine began to sputter in 1967, some people at Capitol must have secretly smiled. Without hits, Murry Wilson was totally powerless, and could be completely ignored.

The mercenary aspects of the record business were particularly prominent in the late fifties and early sixties. The rock 'n' roll explosion meant huge sales for the record companies that had before done quite nicely with Broadway show albums and singers like Sinatra. In 1961, when the Beach Boys first started making records, the music industry was still geared towards the adults. Elvis may have sold bunches for RCA, but there was a pervasive hope that the rock 'n' rollers would go away. Along with that failed prayer was the feeling that these rock bands were just an insignificant commodity. Few groups at that time were writing their own material or producing their own records. As long as the record companies' in-house producers and writers controlled things, the new rock group with their big smash hit was unimportant. There would be a bunch of kids along the next day to take their place. A further handicap for young talent was the dishonesty of the business. Artists were consistently being cheated by their record companies, their managers, their publishers, or all of the above. It was this system that the Beach Boys were up against. With Murry's help they fought it. Unfortunately for Brian and the boys, Murry Wilson didn't have the innate shrewdness or slickness to combat the executives. His bombastic behavior only succeeded in alienating them.

Roger Christian remembers that "Murry Wilson was an honorable man. His word was his bond. He was one of the finest men I've ever known. A lot of people will say he was a hardhead; he was only a hardhead because he knew what was right, and he was very protective of his family. Whatever he told you, you could put in the bank. He was as honest as they come."

Murry's managerial stint with the Beach Boys lasted for less than three years, years that saw the Beach Boys become one of the largest recording and performing acts in the world. As Audree Wilson recalls, those years weren't always filled with the joys of growing success. "They went through a lot of tough, tough times together. Murry would pick on Denny. Denny taught himself to play the drums. He was at that point learning all the time. He used to beat the hell out of the drums, and Murry would be signaling to him to 'tone it down, tone it down,' and Denny would ignore him. And then Murry would say to me, 'You go tell him to stop playing so loud.' Things like that, just dissension."

When the Beach Boys grew tired of Murry's tyrannical control, they fired him. Audree Wilson remembers that Murry was terribly hurt, but "the funny part of it was that he said he wouldn't work for them anymore; he couldn't take it, said he couldn't stand it. . . . He did so many jobs. He wanted to be everything and take care

of all the facets, and that's pretty hard to do when a business grew as fast as that did." When Cummings and Current, an accounting firm that took over the management of the group, asked Murry to assist in setting up the tours, he refused. According to Audree, "He was very stubborn about that, and yet he would give advice. Wanted or unwanted, he gave a lot of very good advice. They would say years later, 'Why didn't we listen to him?' I've heard Carl say, 'We were punks.' They were just kids, they really were."

When the Beach Boys fired Murry, his pride was very hurt, and as Chuck Britz explains, "Murry wanted to prove to them that he could make another group as great as they were," which is why he formed the Sunrays.

Murry was doing the best he could though, and it should be noted that, in those days, there weren't any professional management firms for rock groups as there are today. Everybody was just feeling their way in the business, and most talent was eventually exploited. Murry can only be praised for trying to protect his kids. It was a difficult task, as Audree Wilson notes: "He used to call them young stallions. It was a very hard job for him, having three teen-age boys and a nephew." It ultimately was more than he could handle. A number of associates felt that Murry was just simply out of his depth, out of his element.

In business dealings Murry was, as Gary Usher remembers, "A hard person to get along with. He knew what he wanted, and he pushed really hard to get it. Murry was basically dated in the record business; he was from another era and had learned what he had learned from another era. It wasn't really applicable to what was coming down in the early sixties. The sons, of course, were very progressive, so Murry in some respects was like a bull in a china shop. His personality was so overwhelming; he could aim it at you like a ton of bricks, wham! People would talk to him, and after he left, they'd say, 'What was that? Is he for real?' I'd hear that all the time. He was blind to all of that; he'd just push forward—get out of the way!

"It was him barging into doors and pushing ahead that created a mystique, an awe about the whole thing. He had his own moral codes that he followed, and he felt that everyone else should follow them. The truth of the matter is that some of those moral codes left something to be desired. Murry would miss certain subtleties that were involved, especially in dealing with his sons. He wasn't aware in certain areas where they were, that was the main thing. Murry wasn't sensitive enough in some respects and overly sensitive in others. That's why it was so tough in that family; it was hard to communicate with Murry."

Fred Vail is one of the most loyal, dedicated, and level-headed employees and friends the Beach Boys have ever had, and he is one of Murry's staunchest defenders. "No one will ever beat Murry as far as the Beach Boys are concerned. He's my idol, I guess. He's looked on with disfavor by a lot of people, but when you get right down to the nitty-gritty, he was great. People think he held them back, bruised Brian's ego, stuff like that. Very few people, however, recognize or even realize the importance of Murry's contribution, particularly when you consider the politics of the industry and the [fight] for survival."

According to Vail, Murry was "a pusher and a doer. He would camp out in front of the office of Capitol's executives until they would see him. The world couldn't neglect the Beach Boys as long as Murry was around." While he was the group's manager, Murry effectively used the group's records to complement the live performances. Vail notes that "Murry made sure that the local radio station always had the latest Beach Boys records to play. He covered all the bases." Murry's chief source of income was that he administered and eventually owned the publishing of the Beach Boys' songs. Frequently, Murry went to Europe to take care of the foreign publishing. As Fred Vail recalls, "Murry would buy gifts in bulk. Then, when the boys were on tour, in each city he'd have a gift for the disc-jockey and the jock's wife. Murry would go to the station, and when he'd see the D.J.s he would ask them about their families. He would even remember their wives' names. And then he would give the guy some French perfume to give to his wife. Murry was a very generous person."

Rick Henn was a classmate of Carl's at Hollywood's Professional High School, and Carl introduced him to Murry. Rick had a group, and Murry took them over, dressing them in striped shirts like the Beach Boys. Chuck Britz feels Murry used the Sunrays "to prove to the Beach Boys he didn't need them for harmonies. He could make these guys do it. And they couldn't. They weren't that good singers. They were a bunch of good guys, but they only had two hits, "Andrea" and "I Live For The Sun.""

Murry did his best to copy the Beach Boys, but without Brian's talents, the Sunrays were just the latest in a string of imitations of the Beach Boys' sound. As the organizer of the project, Murry's creative limitations shone through because he had to hire producer / arranger Don Ralke. According to Britz, "Don Ralke did all the coaching. He put it all together. He did the arrangements; he did the vocal things. He'd even sing with them to help out."

Murry's basic distrust and dislike for outsiders was absorbed by the group, and they too became wary of people who weren't part of the "family." The family eventually grew as the guys got married, and the organization grew with the group's success. Many of the employees were part of the Beach Boys' family. Murry had warned his kids not to trust people because people would

use the boys to achieve their own success. Ironically, an entire organization grew up around Brian Wilson's talents, a huge family of people, all with their own families and all depending upon the Beach Boys' continued success for their own personal security.

Somewhere along the line, this lack of trust that had been fostered by Murry was "rewarded" with financial disaster when the group began to trust the wrong people. The Beach Boys' basic innocence was destroyed by dishonest management in the early 1970s.

In the mid-60s, Murry's involvement with the group tapered off. Still, he was their publisher, and because his income depended upon the continued commercial success of the Beach Boys' records, he reportedly had many negative things to say about the new type of songs that Brian was writing in 1965 and 1966.

The Wilson family business was not a smoothly operating machine by 1966. Murry wasn't managing the group anymore, nor was he exerting parental influence over his boys. The Wilson brothers' use of drugs served to further divide the family. Audree Wilson painfully recalls that time: "I remember Carl coming to me and telling me that he had smoked marijuana. Brian and Carl both told me at the same time. We were walking through an airport, and I just choked, because at that time it was such a new thing to me. I knew nothing about it except 'Stay away! Dangerous! Bad!' And of course, their father, oh, he just went wild, because they all told him. They were very honest, and I used to wish they had never told. We talked about that later and Carl said, 'No, we had to do that, we had to be honest about it.' They were very upfront.

"So there was a time when that was going on when Murry wouldn't let them come to our house. It was a terrible time in my life. He wouldn't let them come over until the day they would tell him, 'I'll never touch another marijuana cigarette again.' And I only got to see them—really, it was sort of sneaky. He didn't want me to go to their houses, and instead of asserting myself and saying, 'Go to hell, they're my sons,' I did what he told me to do. It was on a Christmas day when he said, 'You can have the family over for Christmas.' I was ecstatic. I was thrilled, and they all came over and had a wonderful day, a wonderful dinner. And I don't remember if they ever said to him [that they wouldn't smoke marijuana anymore]. That's very vague. What is very prominent in my mind is the pain of the months he wouldn't allow them to come to our house. That's how strongly he felt about it, not wanting to see his own sons. He really loved them dearly, in his own way."

His love often had a negative effect, though. Derek Taylor, a Beach Boys publicist in the mid-60s, and now a major record company executive, observed that Murry "was a daft man. He really scared the hell out of his boys." Taylor remembered that Mike Love had some great stories about Murry and "I was always trying to get them out of him." Taylor also felt that Murry "knocked them about emotionally to the point where they became the image he'd set up for them. Carl had to take so much weight, be so calm. Dennis had to be such a crack-shot son."

In the late sixties, Murry's involvement with the group was almost non-existent. Fred Vail thinks that Murry's absence was one of the principal reasons for the group's decline. Nick Grillo, who managed the group's corporate finances for the second half of that decade has been blamed for the Beach Boys' money problems, as was his successor, Jack Rieley. Audree Wilson recalls that Grillo "seemed to be a good manager, and my husband was the first one to point out that things weren't the way they should be. He used to tell the boys, 'Do this; do that; don't do this; don't do that.' They didn't listen. They have all said since that he was right. Nick Grillo invested the money very unwisely and lost a fortune. They were really worried, they were in trouble, damn near broke. Maybe not broke-broke, but they weren't where they should have been." As for Jack Rieley, Audree Wilson dismisses him by saying, "I think Jack is very prone to exaggeration, that's putting it mildly. I always liked Jack very much. He had a lot of nice qualities."

In the early seventies, Murry and the Beach Boys had pretty much gone their separate ways. Road manager Rick Nelson recalls that "Carl or Dennis would invite Audree on tour, 'Come on, Mom, it'll be a nice tour, you can spend a couple of days with us.' They would invite Audree but not Murry. They didn't get along with him basically. There was more fear than anything else."

Although Audree and Murry had a very difficult relationship, they seemed to reach a peace in 1972, and reportedly were living together more harmoniously than ever. At that same time, Dennis and Murry grew close, sharing a passion for fishing as well as a realization that they were very much the same person.

Murry Wilson's imprint on the Beach Boys and especially his three sons has been immense, and the ambivalent relationship between father and sons shaped much of their personalities. Most people agree that Dennis is the one most like Murry, but Brian seems to have been the son most affected by his father. One minor indication of how Murry got on Brian's nerves—Brian once wrote a song called, "I'm Bugged At My Old Man." The musical reason for Brian being upset was, "He don't even know where it's at." As Murry later noted, Brian meant the song as a put-on, but he meant it. Brian recalled, "There was a lot of his critical mind . . . I learned from it. I learned to be highly critical of myself, and I am with myself, very critical because of that." Murry's criticism of Brian's work was a sore point between them 'til the day Murry died.

ED ROACH

Record companies regularly repackage old songs by artists who are no longer on their label, so nobody was surprised when Capitol released *Endless Summer* in 1974, a two-record set that was Capitol's umpteenth attempt to cash in on their Beach Boys catalogue.

What was shocking was the album's success. Spurred on by a massive TV campaign, the album went to number-one on the album charts, the first million-seller for the group in a long time.

The success of *Endless Summer* was only a part of the group's new appeal. Between the endless touring and the changing social climate in the country, it was only natural that the Beach Boys' music would catch on with a whole new generation. Besides that, the old records had been so well produced by Brian, that they still sounded fresh; and they lyrically captured a time in America that was a focus for the growing trend toward nostalgia.

The fans weren't asking anymore, "What happened to the Beach Boys?" It was more like, "Hey, where have you guys been all my life?" Discovered by the new teenagers, and never abandoned by a fanatical older cult, the Beach Boys had their largest audience since the mid-60s. Surprisingly, a large number of rock critics turned out to be big Beach Boys fans. Suddenly, they came out of the closet, admitting that they knew the Beach Boys were great all along, and that they were the original thing and it "sure is good to have 'em back."

The Beach Boys were back, but where was Brian Wilson? Very simply, Brian was hiding from a hurtful world. It was a curious combination . . . the Beach Boys' resurgence and Brian's retreat.

ED ROACH

Opposite bottom, Legendary surfers, (from left to right): front row: Dick Dale, Carl Wilson, and Mike Love; back row: Terry Melcher, Jan Berry, Dean Torrence, and Bruce Johnston. Brian is in the middle and is also pictured opposite top. Above (from left to right): Dennis, Carl, Mike, and Al meditate.

12.
ENDLESS SUMMER

Brian Wilson in 1974 was a deeply troubled man, depressed, self-destructive, and given to long bouts of drink and drugs. The result of this "condition" was that Brian, for the first time in his life, made a public spectacle of himself.

There was one night at the Troubadour when Brian, in his bathrobe, unexpectedly jumped up on-stage to sing "Be Bop a Lula." The only problem was that the band playing was Larry Coryell's jazz group. Brian was ejected from the club, dejected at having embarrassed himself. David Anderle, when he heard of incidents like that, was very upset. "He never went through those public displays when we were together. The thought of Brian even drinking—I can't believe that."

ED ROACH

Then there was Keith Moon's birthday party at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel. Ben Edmonds: "I saw him at that; somebody, it must have been Michele Myer [long a part of the Los Angeles rock music scene], called Brian and said, 'Oh, Brian, it's a fabulous party. You have to come down.' And I think he just walked out of the house, got in the car and drove down, which was incredible 'cause he wasn't supposed to drive at that point in time. He didn't have a license [Brian was involved in a number of accidents]. I saw him, and he just walked in with this bathrobe on. In the Keith Moon scheme of things, that certainly isn't a major outrage by any means. He fit in perfectly."

In view of the fact that this behavior was disturbing, one wonders where the Wilson family was at times like this. In '74, Brian had moved out of the main part of his house, and moved into the "chauffeur's quarters." Those around in 1974 note that Brian was weighed down by both personal problems and his physical condition. He was being made to feel guilty by at least one family member, and at the same time, Marilyn was not always around. If Brian was in as bad shape as some people observed, then why wasn't there any effort made to help him? As Audree Wilson remembers, "It would get to the point where Marilyn really thought Brian needed help, then he seemed okay, and she'd sort of forget about it, not necessarily talking to him about it at all."

When Brian began granting interviews in '76, one of the most frequently asked questions was "What did you do during the last few years?" Brian's simple answer: "Drugs and hanging out with Danny Hutton. He was one of my best friends. . . . It was a Danny Hutton period. It wasn't because of him that I did drugs . . . it was a matter of seeing people like Van Dyke Parks and Danny Hutton." Brian did the drugs "with Danny, shared a lot of stuff with him."

The Wilson family despised Brian's friends as leeches who only came around to get money from Brian to spend on drugs, or what one member of the family described as "their imaginary projects." To Marilyn Wilson, these people were the "drainers."

One of Brian's friends claims "it was Marilyn and Diane who were really the 'drainers.' At least Brian's

friends had creative projects. Marilyn and Diane's ideas weren't the least bit clever. They were always jealous because Danny Hutton or Van Dyke Parks could get Brian thinking and interested in creating, and they couldn't do it even with incessant pleading and threats.

"There was also this double standard that really bugged me. If Brian wanted to buy some musical equipment for one of his friends, that caused a big stink, but it was okay if Marilyn bought matching fur coats for herself and her friends. After all, it was Brian that made the money. It was his to throw away if he wanted to. They were always getting down on him for doing things that they would turn around and do themselves."

Another friend described the situation around Brian as a "malicious matriarchy with people like Mike Love, whose name belies what he really is. Brian is not able to express himself due to the Machiavellian politics around him that lay waste to his prodigious talent."

From the family's point of view, people like Danny and Van Dyke were just indulging Brian's increasing appetite for drugs and weirdness. Regardless of who was right, everybody was powerless to prevent Brian's downward spiral of self-destructive behavior.

Brian's musical interest in 1974 was still strong, but he had virtually no desire to share it with any but a select few friends. Brian recalled, "People kept asking, 'What's your next song going to be, Brian?' I didn't know, and it got so that I didn't want to know. . . . I got to a point where I couldn't even go to a piano—I was too afraid." Apparently, he did spend a lot of time, in private, at the piano, because one friend of Brian's remembers a night when Brian played twelve new compositions (none of which has ever been released). The dozen songs were complete, melody and lyrics, and included two very emotional songs, "Spark in the Dark" and "Just an Imitation." The latter was written about Murry.

Terry Melcher has likened a visit to Brian's house in the mid-70s to a visit to see Aesop to hear the latest fable. Bruce Johnston: "Brian went through a period where he would write songs, and play them for a few people in his living room,

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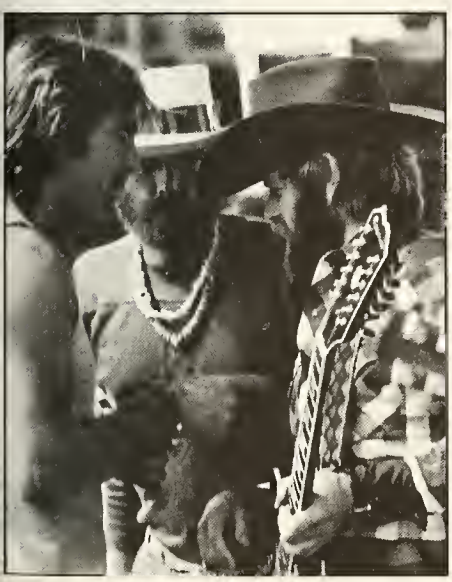

Opposite and below right, Backstage at Anaheim Stadium, summer, 1975. Brian played volleyball and drove a golf cart (pictured with Marilyn and daughter Wendy) but did not go onstage. Above, Mike Love explains his stage routines: "Trying to draw a bridge betweeen the music and the audience and make it interesting is something that I've always been interested in doing. . . . There's one thing I do that's kind of a personal thing—I tell jokes sometimes which are corny, which are outright stupid and bomb. That, to me, is funny when nobody laughs."

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and that's the last you would hear of them. I don't know what Brian did with these songs. I've heard things of Brian's all the way along. I can play you things that never even got recorded that I think are hits. A lot of the times, it's not always what he writes, it's the way he voices [vocally arranges] what he writes." To Bruce, Brian was just writing the songs, and not developing them; "He may make these little sketches knowing that he'd never be able to do a canvas, but I think if we offered him the canvas, they'd be done. Take it separate from the Beach Boys, separate from anything he's been doing. Don't make it Brian's solo album, you just make it Brian Wilson's project," and something would get done. "Don't even announce it, just say, 'Brian, if you want to do this, you can do it. You have three years to do it, and if you do it, you can perform it or have it played, and if you want, you can have it recorded. And there are no strings attached." That opportunity was never concretely offered to Brian.

Occasionally, Brian would be motivated to record. Brother Studio engineer and record-producer Earle Mankey remembers the first time he worked with Brian in the mid-70s. "At one session of

Above, Jim Pewter with Brian. Below, The Beach Boys and Chicago at New York's Madison Square Garden, June, 1975. James William Guercio is on the right, singing with Carl Wilson.

Carl's, somebody said to Brian, 'Let's cut a track,' and he said, 'I have this great song, it's called "Ding, Dang."' It was a legendary track, and it was around, as I understand it, for a long time."

In late August 1974, Brian made one

of his rare media excursions to KRTH-FM radio in Los Angeles for an interview with Jim Pewter, a longtime L.A. disc-jockey and keeper of the surf music flame.

Brian discussed his Beach Boys career as Pewter played many great hits and album cuts. Pewter also showed Brian a record industry trade magazine that showed the success of *Endless Summer* and "Surfin' U.S.A.," which was becoming a hit again, eleven years after it first went top-ten. Brian commented: "It's going to be a little freaky for me to see that, but, nevertheless, I can accept that. It definitely makes me think I'm dreaming, because I see the title [on the charts]. Now, I've seen that title before on another chart sometime in another year somewhere before. And then I see it again, and I think, 'Huh? That again?' But with a new kind of thing happening. It seems weird. It gives me a shock, and when I go through shocks I go [makes funny noise]. I go through shocks."

Pewter asked Brian if he had any plans for performing live. "If I could lose some weight, I'd be on stage. I'd do it, I really would. But I'm overweight, it's my problem at the time. And that can be a problem."

Brian was also disturbed by the memories that "Good Vibrations" and "Heroes and Villains" evoked, and when Pewter played those songs, Brian walked out of the booth.

Significantly, an article in the L.A. *Times* that took note of the interview was headlined, "Ex-Beach Boy Revisits Waves."

Meanwhile, the Beach Boys' battle between the oldies and the newer material was in its last round. The release and subsequent success of *Endless Summer* created an increased demand for the hits. It was James William Guercio (the guiding light behind the group Chicago) who finally established some order in the chaotic situation. Rick Nelson remembers, "They always internally had big discussions and arguments about what songs to play. Mike always wanted to do all the oldies, as many as they could, because he knew the effect of them. Carl, along with Ricky, kept on saying that the creativity was in the new material. They'd come up with a compromise and a couple of days later, they'd change it. It wasn't until Guercio came along and started touring [he played bass] that there was a person who could say, 'Yeah, Mike's right and Carl's right' and make the show totally work.

ED ROACH

CHUCK PULIN

ED ROACH

Jim was more than the bass player on the tours. He'd get them to sit down and do critiques after the show, which they'd never done. They used to just all go off in their own direction. He'd have meetings after the show, 'What happened during this song? Why didn't that work? Carl gets mad when you call him Cousin Carl, so don't do that anymore, Mike,' . . . all sorts of bizarre things like that. That was about the time Ricky left. Blondie went first. They were comfortable doing the music and getting paid well, but they just felt something inside. The result of that might be drinking too much or temper flare-ups. Ricky and Carl were really close and when Ricky wasn't there anymore to back him up on playing the new stuff, Carl had no alliance." With Ricky no longer on drums, Dennis became a more integral part of the show again. As Rick Nelson noted,

Above top left, Ricky Fataar played drums, guitar, and flute onstage for the Beach Boys. Above top right, When Ricky left the group, Dennis returned to the drums. Above, Dennis streaks

ED ROACH

"I think the greatest thing that ever happened for him was to get back with playing drums. His whole attitude changed; he really felt vital to the group again."

The Beach Boys were apparently pleased with the way things were running with Guercio around, so they agreed to have him manage the band. Rick Nelson remembers that "Brian wasn't around during those days, Brian was a nonexistent Beach Boy. One of Guercio's projects was to get Brian involved again. He promised the guys, 'I can do it.'" The group did spend some time in Caribou Ranch and recording studio in late fall of 1974, but there was no significant progress made toward the recording of a new album. The group's last record, *Holland*, had been released in January of 1973 and with the success of *Endless Summer,* Warner Brothers was pushing the group for some new "product." None was forthcoming, because the Beach Boys felt that a new album would have to be exceptional to match the quality of the earlier hits, and that quality could only be achieved by Brian Wilson.

Brian wasn't particularly interested in doing a Beach Boys album, but in December 1974 he did record a new single. Unfortunately, it was a yuletide song, "Child of Winter," and by the time the record company could release it, Christmas was past. Aside from that one record, there wasn't much music emanating from the Wilson house, although one friend remembers that around Christmastime in '74, Brian wrote one beautiful composition that was a lot like "Surf's Up." That song, too, was not for public consumption.

The Beach Boys' new popularity wave was just cresting, and with Guercio leading the way, the future looked bright. Guercio, according to Rick Nelson, "was the one who put together the Chicago/Beach Boys tour, which wasn't an easy thing to do. It was his idea; he was looking at both sides." Still, the tour greatly benefited the Beach Boys, while at the same time it made Chicago seem fairly dull in comparison. Nelson remembers that "there was some tension between Guercio and Chicago because it was the first time he'd done anything but them since they got together. It was not an easy time for him, but he was very interested in revitalizing the Beach Boys. A big part of that was that he believed in Brian as an important musician."

Another Capitol repackage *Spirit of America*, bulleted up the charts in the summer of 1975, and Rick Nelson recalls that all the new success gave the Beach Boys renewed confidence, and they fired Guercio." The Beach Boys felt that they didn't need anyone and made comments like 'Guercio just happened to come

along at the right time; he just lucked out.' They would never give credit to anyone."

With or without Guercio, it was a successful time for the group. They were named *Rolling Stone*'s Band of the Year (for 1974), and although they weren't the headliners, the Beach Boys stole the show from Elton John at a Wembley Stadium concert in the summer of 1975. Unfortunately, the Beach Boys' portion of the show was a big hit on the strength of the oldies machine, while Elton, to his credit, was introducing an entire album, *Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy*.

All this time, Warners was still clamoring for a new album, and with none forthcoming, they reissued a lot of Beach Boys material from the post-*Pet Sounds* days. Warners' reissues had only limited success, and the Beach Boys were asking questions like "How come Capitol can do so well with our records and you are our present company and the records aren't selling?" Rick Nelson explains, "They blamed the record company. It's never the group's fault. They always blame it on either the record company or the management." Warners was really paralyzed. They were the Beach Boys' current label for *new* material, and they were getting a lot of flack for not selling old records. The Beach Boys, with the past staring them in the face, looked to Brian to help them match their former glory. Brian, meanwhile, was looking elsewhere to exercise his creativity.

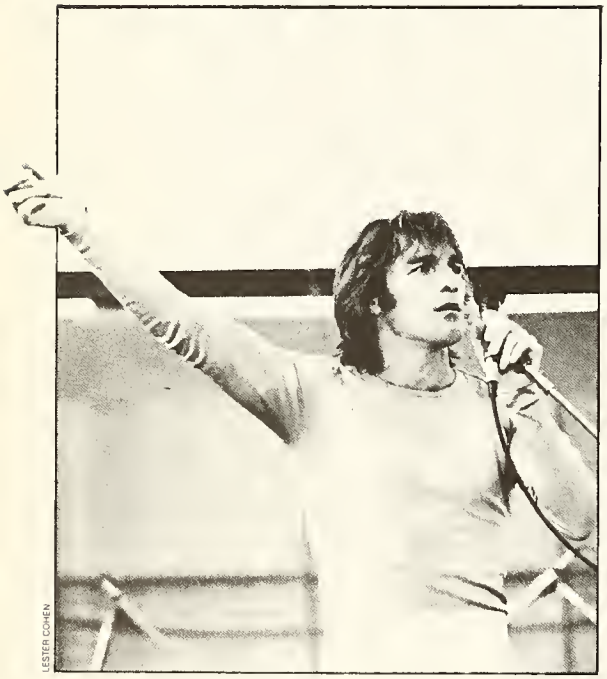
Bruce Johnston: "I don't think Brian had a friend he could trust in the band, and that's why he developed a little bit of a relationship with Terry Melcher." Terry, through the years, has been one of Brian's closest allies. In 1971, Terry told *Rolling Stone*: "He's as good as anyone I've heard. He writes fantastic melodies . . . but he isn't a lyricist so he's put down. . . . The people who put him down, if they were really musicians, they'd forget the words and get into the structure . . . his [music] has a depth that other people can't touch. . . . He knows more about music than anyone who's at present on the music scene. He knows a

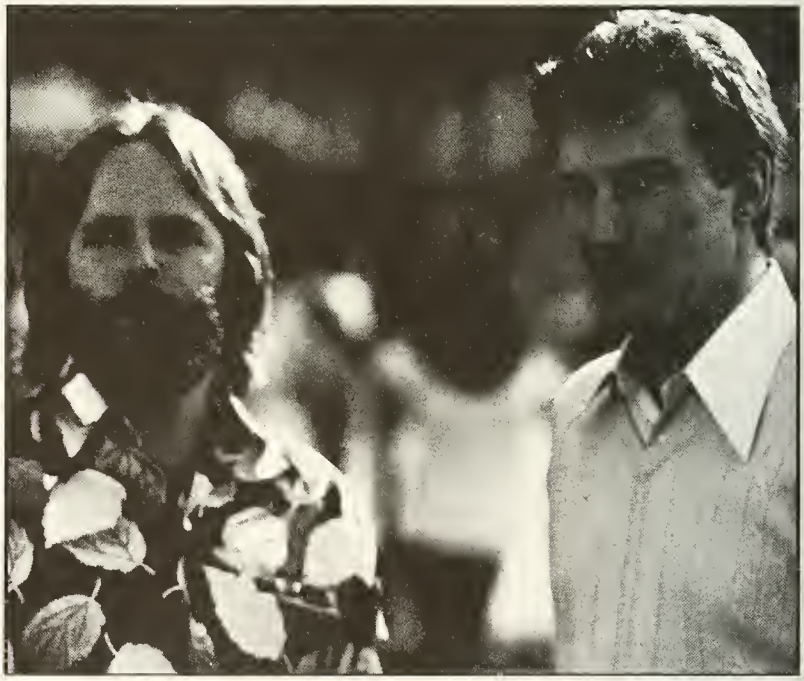
COURTESY OF THE BEACH BOYS

LESTER COHEN

Anaheim, 1975. Opposite, Dennis and Brian. Above left, from left to right: Mike, Carl, Al, Billy Hinsche, and Dennis. Left, Brian accepts a platinum album for Endless Summer, *Brian explains his contribution to the group in the mid-'70s. "I was supporting the group in thought and communicating with some of the members. And I was thrilled that they could release repackages like* Endless Summer, *and, of course, the old songs took off with the new generation. I was very much into that. I can't say I contributed all that much . . . to the group . . . at that time."*

CHUCK PULIN


LESTER COHEN


ED ROACH

lot more. He left the music, yes, but he left it, it didn't leave him."

In 1975, when Brian wanted to get back to making records, he went to Terry. Bruce and Terry had formed a production company called Equinox, which was associated with RCA. They told RCA that they were going to allow Brian to use their company as his own and agreed to turn over all royalties to Brian for whatever he produced.

At that time, Brian had no money of his own. The family had taken away his credit cards and cash because he was giving people money for drugs, but Brian also had no money for everyday things like taking a taxi or eating dinner. One longtime friend of Brian's remembers, "He had no personal freedom, let alone musical freedom." It was good that Brian didn't have the money to buy drugs, but if he was in so much trouble that the family took away his money, then just preventing his buying drugs wasn't the solution to his problems.

Brian, Bruce Johnston recalls, "told Terry, 'I need some of my own money for my own bank account.'" Brian didn't want a handout. He told them, "I need to earn my way back." Terry helped Brian open an account, but Brian left the bankbook around the house, and as Bruce remembers, "Eventually the money was transferred to an old business account, right away from him, which was kind of strange."

There was one point where one of Brian's friends was functioning as a personal manager, when Brian decided he wanted to make a complete break from the Beach Boys. This person was trying to acquire copies of all the contracts that Brian had signed because Brian "doesn't have any idea what deals he's a party to." That desire to quit the group that had galvanized Brian's friends never became positive action.

Hal Blaine, who had drummed on so many of the Beach Boys' hits, remembers the session when Brian came in to work on a record with Bruce and Terry. "We were doing a session for Terry Melcher at RCA. . . . Terry said, 'Brian's coming, and I think he's gonna make it.' Brian did come in; he was a little strange. It wasn't standoffish; I think he was frightened to death. I think he was panicked. Brian walked in, his hair was rather long, and he sat down, and he started playing 'Good Vibrations' at the piano. And a kind of chill went through me, and Brian looked at me and said, 'Do you remember this song?' And I said, 'Do I!' And then he just hugged me . . . gave me a hug and said hello. And we got on with it; that was

that."

Terry Melcher later recalled that Brian "wouldn't go all the way. He wouldn't even touch anything in the control booth; he acted like he was afraid to. He'd offer suggestions, but he wouldn't go near the board. He knows his reputation, so he makes a lot of unfinished records; sometimes, I feel that he feels that he's peaked and does not want to put his stamp on records so that peers will have a Brian Wilson track to criticize."

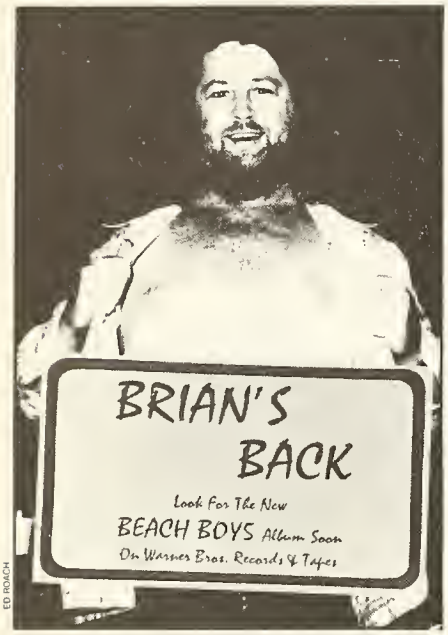
Brian only produced one record under the name of California Music, a fictitious name that Bruce and Terry had "for him to do anything he wanted with." Bruce explains that "Brian spent a day and night talking to us about it; he was really desperate for an outlet, because basically the deal at Warners was for the Beach Boys. . . . Eventually, he just sent the money back to RCA. I think that if Brian had gone to Mo Ostin and said, 'I want to produce my own things without the Beach Boys, give me a budget,' he would have gotten it. I just don't think he knew how to speak up for himself or realizes that he's an important spoke of the Beach Boys' wheel." A Warner Brothers executive remembers discussing recording projects with Brian, but notes that Brian was very "hot and cold" and he never seemed to keep up his enthusiasm for a project for a long enough time to get anything accomplished.

The very serious intense depression that Brian was caught up in by the latter half of 1975 was the absolute low. One observer claims, "He was suicidal, and this time, he was quite serious." Dennis Wilson, after Brian came out of the depression, said, "He was really sick; it was terrible. I could sit here and tell you atrocity stories of things that have happened to Brian. . . . I thought it was permanent brain damage. That's how I was living for a while. That was frightening, to think that somebody you love very much will be permanently damaged. If you'd have seen him just a year ago, you would have been convinced that he was permanently ruined. It's phenomenal, the way he is. It takes a lot of guts for a guy like Brian to come back, put himself in the public that way. . . . The turning point is making an attempt to seek help."

In late 1975, Marilyn Wilson finally decided to seek professional assistance. The man she found, Dr. Eugene Landy, a show-biz psychologist, was the man who brought Brian back to the "normal" world of being a Beach Boy. It was Dr. Landy who made Brian Wilson presentable as a public figure so that in 1976, the Beach Boys could claim, "Brian is back!"

Below, Carl at Brother Studio and, opposite bottom right, with est *founder Werner Ehrhard.*

BARRY LEVINE



The rumors began in late 1975, and grew more persistent as fall broke into the winter of 1976. The Beach Boys were at work on a new studio album. Of course, there had been talk of a new album for years; the difference this time was that Brian Wilson, for the first time since *Smile* died, was going to produce the album.

Brian's return was the capstone to the Beach Boys' big comeback and helped make 1976 the biggest and probably most profitable year in the group's history. Because of Brian's presence, the group was again important enough to merit extensive coverage in the mass media. There were cover stories in *New Times, Crawdaddy,* the *Village Voice, People,* and *Rolling Stone,* and many other feature articles in publications like *Newsweek, TV Guide* and *New West.* The Beach Boys also "starred" in their first-ever network television special on NBC, and a six-hour syndicated radio documentary on the group's history was widely distributed throughout the country.

This hoopla produced impressive results at the box office—the group's first top-ten hit single in eight years, their first gold album of new studio material in eleven years, and a huge sold-out concert tour of major stadia around the country. All of this served to reconfirm that the Beach Boys were an important part of American music, just in case anybody had forgotten.

This return to prominence was centered on one slightly inaccurate but highly successful phrase, "Brian is back!" The Bicentennial year was often criticized for overcommerciality. The Beach Boys, the ultimate American band, did their part to keep in step with the country. They were very involved in an offensive effort that might be called "The Selling of Brian Wilson."

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COURTESY OF THE BEACH BOYS

Above, The Beach Boys in 1977. Opposite bottom, From behind the stage of the Oakland Stadium, July 2, 1976. Opposite top, Brian at Brother Studio.

13.
BRIAN IS BACK

The architect of Brian Wilson's reemergence into public view was Dr. Eugene Landy, a "Hollywood" psychologist who was known for getting quick results with outrageous methods for exorbitant fees. If anything was going to make Brian Wilson become a Beach Boy again, it would take the total domination of a man like Landy.

It is important at this point to make a distinction between what is good for Brian Wilson and what is good for the Beach Boys. The group needed Brian to rejuvenate their recording career. They also knew that his presence would get the band a lot of publicity, and publicity sells records. Brian, on the other hand, was an unhappy man who needed love and attention. As one friend of his insisted, "Brian didn't need the attention of an adoring public who loved him for his music. He knows that he's a great musician. And he didn't need to have hits, even though some members of his family loved him better when he was having hits." The family felt that what Brian needed was to have a couple of hits, perform in concert and then he'd be alright. What they were ignoring was the fact that a slew of hit records and claims of "genius" hadn't prevented Brian from having a series of nervous breakdowns in the 1960s. To Brian, the shallowness of success was something he was well aware of, and something he didn't want to be engulfed by again. He already knew that hits wouldn't make him happy.

SUZAN CARSON

Dr. Landy first came into the Wilson family's life when he was called by Marilyn. In David Felton's 1976 *Rolling Stone* story, Marilyn discussed Brian's problems. "It was difficult to find somebody who could help him 'cause I didn't know what needed to be helped. Sometimes I really thought to myself, is it me? Am I the one who's not seein' things right? And it was also difficult for the family to see it the same, and the close friends, because everyone loved Brian and just said, 'Oh, he'll get over it.'"

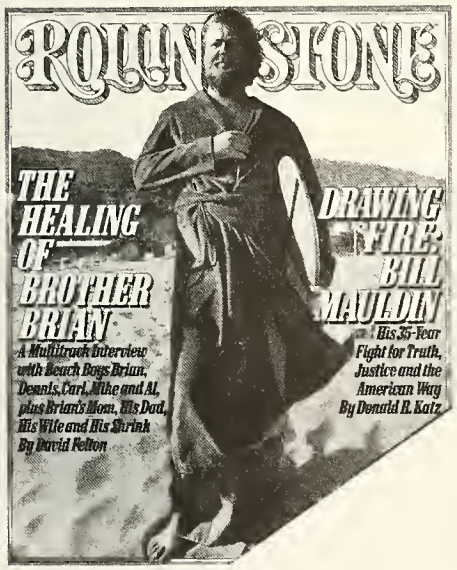
When someone in your family is unhappy or sick, it is not easy to accept that fact, because admitting that the problem exists can mean accepting part of the blame for causing the troubled situation. It is hard to watch somebody you love wasting away, and in the Beach Boys' case, this was compounded by their knowledge of how talented Brian is. Still, a pretend game of "Everything's alright; it'll be better in the morning" can only be played for so long.

As Marilyn noted, "The thing that made me go to Dr. Landy was I couldn't stand to see Brian, whom I just love and adore, unhappy with himself and not really creating. . . . When I met Dr. Landy, I knew I'd met someone who could play Brian's game." By "Brian's game," Marilyn was partially referring to Brian's skill at manipulating people toward his own desires. Brian is incredibly perceptive and aware of everything, even when his expression is frighteningly blank.

Right away, Landy's game-playing with Brian was

considered a mistake by one of Brian's close friends. "Dealing with Brian on a human level isn't playing his game. It's getting past it. There's no value in playing games with Brian. He wants people to get past the games. Those games are only played for survival. To really relate to Brian, to be his friend and give him support, you have to get one step beyond the game-playing."

Marilyn Wilson had one other observation that finished off an earlier quote. "But I'm the one who had to live with it." Marilyn is Brian's wife and the mother of his children, although she wasn't totally involved in Brian's personal care. One friend of Brian's observed that "Marilyn wasn't there all the time to take care of him. She'd go off to Hawaii or out of town to see a Beach Boys concert, and Brian would be home alone. By the way, Marilyn isn't exactly a pure



martyr. She digs being Mrs. Brian Wilson and the money and status that goes with that."

Yet, as Ben Edmonds feels, "In a lot of respects, Marilyn probably put up with an awful lot. Just in the sense that she was left pretty much to raise the kids by herself. And having to take care of Brian almost as if he was another one of the kids. And indulge Brian and make sure that Brian was OK. And then, having to raise the girls herself. That's not an easy job for anyone. I would think that she held all of that together is incredibly to her credit." Yes it is, except that all that was really done was to hold it together. Like the Beach Boys' false image of harmony, the family sometimes seemed to be more concerned with their image to the outside world than whether Brian was happy.

Dr. Landy was given complete charge of Brian's life, and a team of people was put together to direct his daily activities and to help in the "rehabilitation" process. There were a therapist and a live-in bodyguard (the ever-present Scott Steinberg) as well as Landy. Stan Love (Mike's brother and a former professional basketball player) was Brian's constant companion, chauffeur, physical fitness director, and as it turned out, a sympathetic friend who truly was concerned with Brian's well-being. A rigid schedule was imposed on Brian's life, a nine-to-five existence that was totally the opposite of everything he'd been living since the Beach Boys came into being.

According to a number of accounts, Landy first diagnosed Brian as a paranoid schizophrenic from Marilyn's description of Brian's behavior. Aside from the merits of any diagnosis that isn't the result of careful interaction with a patient, Dr. Landy's professional ethics also appear to be questionable. His public discussion of Brian's personal problems could not have helped Landy and Brian build a relationship founded in trust and confidentiality. The public airing of Brian's difficulties must have embarrassed Brian while it created sensational stories for the hungry media machine.

Still, Landy's approach got through to Brian. As Landy explained, the whole point of all the activities was "to prove that he's not really crazy, that he's not sick, but that he's just not acting in an acceptable way. We've just been enculturated to define people who act differently as being sick. If Brian wants to act normally, he can." Landy insisted, "There is only room enough for one crazy person in Brian's head and that's got to be me. I have to be the ultimate power in this situation. . . . Brian said, 'Make me.' I said he had to get out of bed and start living a normal life and he said, 'Make me.' How do you make a guy get out of bed after so long? Explain it to him first? No. You throw water on him first. That's just what I did. I warned him, and then threw water on him and he got up.

"I can't let Brian blackmail me. He's manipulated everybody for a long time, and I have to confront him at every turn." Landy's methods were indeed unusual, but they got results quickly.

What didn't make sense was the rush to make Brian a Beach Boy. From what Landy saw, Brian was scared of facing

Opposite, Brian at home, spring 1976. Above (from left to right): Diane, bodyguard Scott Steinberg, psychologist Eugene Landy. Audree Wilson: "I think there must be something about becoming so famous and so acknowledged. . . . There has to be pain with that. I've talked to Brian about the millions of people his music has affected. . . . He'll say, 'Oh, I know it; I really do know that.' But I don't suppose [that takes away from the pain]. So many people think he's the greatest. He is the greatest, and that's very hard to live with."

life. "He was not able to deal with being frightened or even have a response to being frightened," Landy explained. As much as is possible, Brian had withdrawn from emotion, had withdrawn from any activities that might cause him pain. Those painful experiences, to Brian, often came out of being involved with the Beach Boys.

Landy, however, forced Brian to confront those hurtful situations. Then road manager Rick Nelson points out, "In Landy's evaluation of the situation, what was necessary to treat Brian was to make him an active Beach Boy, to make him write and perform music, seeing the fans' response, relating to the people. Just doing it, whether it scared the shit out of him or not, that's what [Landy] made Brian do." Landy claimed that he "was working for Brian Wilson to have something that he has not had, and that's an alternative . . . that if he chooses to withdraw and be scared, that's as good as choosing not to, but to have a choice."

The choice that Landy offered, however, seemed often to be directly at odds with Brian's basic personal and artistic problems. "Brian doesn't want to be a Beach Boy because he *has* to be," one friend pointed out. "Brian only wants to share his music with the world on his own terms. It's not that he doesn't want to work with the Beach Boys; that's not the point. Brian loves working with his brothers when *he* wants to. Not when they make him. Brian wants and needs a base of operations of his own. He wants to be Brian Wilson, person and solo artist, and not have any musical obligations to other people. Then, if he chooses to, he will work with Dennis and/or Carl or the Beach Boys. For Brian to want to

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create music, it has to be his desire, and not because he feels he owes it to his family."

Although Landy claimed to be working for Brian, he often seemed to have the Beach Boys' interests in mind. Nobody would argue that Landy's physical fitness efforts didn't result in a more physically attractive and healthier Brian Wilson. That was an important step, because Brian's self-image as an eyesore needed to be eradicated. The only way to do that was to whip him into good condition. But if Landy was interested in Brian's self-image, why did he put him on public display before Brian's physical state had improved? When the ceaseless publicity parade began, Brian had only lost a few pounds, and he didn't look great.

From an objective point of view, the emotional help that Landy offered seemed very strange. Landy consistently made Brian encounter all the things that make him uncomfortable—the recording studio with the Beach Boys, concert tours, interviews, television—but Landy apparently didn't first equip Brian to deal with the emotional responses to those scary situations. Brian coped. He chain-smoked cigarettes (when he could get his hands on them), and he talked and sang out of the side of his mouth like Buddy Hackett on speed. In effect, Brian went into those hostile environments, went through the motions, and did his best not to allow them to affect him emotionally.

Landy's methods were a much-discussed public item, but he certainly got quick results for the Beach Boys. Rick Nelson says, "Gene Landy is definitely an individual; he has his own way of doing things. The only thing that can be said about them is that they work. He happens to be very successful and gets very bizarre cases. From a fan's point of view, looking at how Brian was suffering was very disturbing, but," Nelson explains, "for so many years, Brian was sheltered from everything and whatever Brian wanted, Brian got and that just pushed him further away. They didn't tell him any of the problems. He didn't have to deal with any reality."

Rick Nelson feels that a lot of the pain Brian experienced in 1976 was justified because until then, Brian had been living in a place that "was closer to a non-world than anything, and being sad is a reality. Landy was trying to do it in a very short span of time . . . one of [Brian's] biggest things to overcome was to get him to be a Beach Boy again." Of course it was; Brian didn't want to be a Beach Boy again or deal with their reality. As Brian noted, the submergence into the Beach Boys' world was "a shock" to his system. "I'm going through shock right now."

"Brian Is Back!" the magazine headlines screamed. Timothy White's two-part story in *Crawdaddy* in particular held out the promise that the musical return of Brian Wilson was not only imminent, but would be quite momentous. That feeling was based on White's reaction to a brand new Brian Wilson song, "California Feeling." Actually, the song was one of the tunes Brian had written during his "reclusive" period. Whatever its merits, it still hadn't been made publicly available as 1978 began, although it was finally recorded. Brian may have returned to the studio, but he didn't have total control over what music would be released.

Aside from the musical rejuvenation that article virtually guaranteed, the Brian Wilson that White wrote of was a man, who was, to say the least, uncomfortable to be "back."

All the interviews and the work in songwriting and recording were ostensibly designed to get Brian well, but the immediate goal seemed to be to get Brian into the studio to produce a new Beach Boys record. It was an extension of Brian's role as family benefactor. From the family's point of view, putting Brian into the studio situation was the right cure.

Landy claimed his work was to give Brian an alternative to his basic do-nothing existence, yet it was becoming

Right (from left to right): Marilyn, Brian, Dennis, Al's back, and Carl at Brother Studio. Opposite bottom, one of the first pictures in the "Brian is Back" campaign. Opposite top, clockwise from left: Stan Love, unnamed Korthofs (relatives of Audree Wilson), Mae and Irving Rovell (Marilyn's parents), Brian, Marilyn, Sherry Champion (a close friend of Marilyn's), and Audree. Mike Love: "Sometimes you can quit a group, but you can't quit your family very easily . . . even if you have a horrible disagreement, he's still your brother or your cousin. So I think that has been one salvation for the group. . . . I don't know what I'd have done if I hadn't been in the Beach Boys. I would probably have made money doing something because I have a strong competitive urge and desire, and I relate to making money with my family." The family ties that have kept the Beach Boys together are incredibly strong. One friend of Brian's points out that regardless of all the hurt Brian has received from his family, "they are just about all he's got. Sure, he's got a few close friends who would take him in, but then what? It's that fear of the unknown that keeps Brian there."

ED ROACH

increasingly obvious that Landy's presence wasn't totally motivated by the family's desire to see Brian well. 1976 was a big public-relations game with Brian as the chief pawn. With Landy pushing Brian from behind with a pitchfork, Brian went out into the world. Landy apparently understood Brian's problems, but his solution was bizarre for a man "suffering from scared." It was like throwing a quadraplegic former Olympic swimmer in the pool; he once knew how to swim, but the muscles didn't work anymore. Or as Bruce Johnston put it, "It's like someone who's not over the flu yet and [people put] him out where there's no heat, out by the ocean."

The making of Brian's comeback album, *15 Big Ones*, was full of conflicts that sometimes even managed to seep through to the public in articles in *Crawdaddy* and *Newsweek*. The original idea of the album was to do a record totally filled with "oldies but goodies," so that

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Brian could ease back into the recording process without having the pressure of coming up with new material. To make things like the "old days," the Beach Boys arranged recording sessions with all the studio musicians that Brian had loved and trusted so much back in the hitmaking days. As Steve Douglas (one of the original session people) noted, "I figured if I got Brian back in the original studio over at Western Three with all the original guys playing and Chuck Britz engineering, I'd get him off his ass; that and Landy, I guess that combination worked. We did 'Blueberry Hill.' He was really nervous and emoting. I thought *15 Big Ones* was more therapy than anything else." If it was supposed to be therapeutic, it was a strange kind of help. Douglas continued, "As soon as we got a couple of days there [at Western], the whole pressure started, all the bullshit. The pressure was just enormous on him. So he didn't really seem to want to take the time to do it."

Brian recalled that he "felt a lot of pressure from the Beach Boys because I told them that I'd produce an album and started to change my mind." It was just like the old days, all right; the old days when the pressure to create drove him into himself. The talk centered around the absence of Beach Boys hits, and how Brian could again make hits for the group.

Underneath the public-relations veneer that "Brian is back, and the Beach Boys are happy to have him," there was a tremendous battle raging within the group. In Brian's absence, the Beach Boys had become a functioning democracy based on one man, one vote, as opposed to the monarchical control he had once had over the group. As Brian described it, "We voted on oldies but goodies on *15 Big Ones.*" In *Newsweek* magazine it was reported that "Jardine and Love were all for letting Brian take full charge, even though Love makes no secret of resenting him. Love, who jumped rope to get in shape for the tour, recently declared, 'I'm not going out on the road like some broken-down rock star.'" The simmering feud between Mike and Brian was already at full-tilt strength, only a few months after Brian started working with the group again. The *Newsweek* story was one of the first public indications that not everyone in the group was totally pleased with Brian's return, their public relations protestations to the contrary.

Carl explained that "Dennis and I had a picture of doing an album of oldies, just as a warmup, and then doing another album. But as it happens, we started to do the new stuff and then Brian said, 'Well, I've recorded enough. I don't want to record any longer and the album's finished.'" Dennis opines, "The album should have been one hundred percent original. We had enough Brian Wilson material to do it. . . . Steve Love [by 1976, the group's business manager], Mike Love and Alan Jardine were pushing to get it out—it was a big push. They'd rather just get it out there than take time with it and develop it. Carl and I were really upset." Somehow, the three brothers seemed to have been victimized by their own band. None of them were happy with what was going on. Rick Nelson remembers that "Dick Duryea [a Beach Boys road manager in the sixties and now a Caribou executive] had an expression, SNAFU. Situation normal, all fucked up."

What is amazing is that the group hadn't learned anything during Brian's long absence. The battles over material were constant, and there still seemed to be no indication that there was any increased sensitivity to Brian's needs as a human being. If *15 Big Ones* was supposed to bring Brian back, it succeeded remarkably well in bringing him back to all the group's old hassles. In the *Newsweek* article, Dennis claimed, "It was a great mistake to put Brian in full control. He was always the absolute producer, but little did he know that in his absence, people grew up, became as sensitive as the next guy. Why should I relinquish my rights as an artist? The whole process was a little bruising." For everyone involved.

Earle Mankey (chief engineer at Brother Studio) remembers, "It was really tense in the studio. Brian would come in around nine or ten in the morning. One day, they would get something done, and the next day they would do nothing except fight." Mankey's role in Brian's comeback is often ignored, but Earle has displayed exceptional sensitivity in his working relationship with Brian, and the two men have developed a strong trust. Mankey observed Brian's tentative return to the studio and feels that Landy's strict scheduling of Brian's activities was "necessary at that time. Otherwise, Brian would have gone home. Brian had writing sessions a couple of times a week, and he'd write two or three songs in a morning. Landy would say, 'Okay, you have to have three songs written today

RICHARD McCAFFREE

Opposite top (from left to right): Earle Mankey, Al, and Carl, and opposite bottom, Brian in the control room at Brother Studio. Above, Onstage Oakland Coliseum, December, 1976. From left to right: Al, jazzman Charles Lloyd, Billy Hinsche, Mike, and Brian. Brian: "It's an old entertainment concept that you just keep an attitude of 'You're going to make others happy' . . ."

because on Thursday and Friday, we have two recording sessions and you won't have anything to record.'" As Rick Nelson noted, "He was just grinding it out because that's what he was instructed to do, write songs . . . ten songs in a day, if that's what they told him to do, but they weren't worth much." Some of the songs were quite good, however, but the songwriting game was pretty silly. Brian had written a lot of songs in the mid-70s, and he frequently dipped into his melody stockpile when he was confronted with the need to produce songs quickly for the group. Prominent examples of this game are "Ding Dang," "It's OK," and "Back Home," all written before Landy's arrival. Nobody was especially fooled by this, except for the public, who were told that Brian's creative return was current. Some of the "Aesop's Fables" that Brian had played for a select audience (including Van Dyke Parks, Bruce Johnston, and Terry Melcher) were now becoming Beach Boys songs. Besides all that, Brian was beginning to write a lot of new songs.

Still, as *Newsweek* magazine reported, all the Beach Boys "shared misgivings about Brian's competence—enough according to Jardine, to sneak into the studio at night and add extra background vocals to the songs which Brian had wanted done 'dry' (without echo)." Their respect for Brian as an artist seemed to have hit a new low in private, while they continued to tell the media that "Brian is back and he's really gonna blow minds when he starts to stretch out."

The recording of *15 Big Ones* was a difficult effort. Brian's interest was fleeting, and it made the record an unfinished, somewhat underproduced affair. Chuck Britz remembers how nervous Brian was: "We did 'Palisades Park' in one take, and then I could see he was completely nervous so I said, 'OK.' I realized that to get another take out of him would have been disastrous. I just said, 'Well, either good, bad, or indifferent, you're only going to get one take out of him so we might as well take it.'" Besides the lack of production time, Brian hadn't fully returned to serious songwriting. As Earle Mankey recounts, "Brian would throw out really catchy melodies in no time. It's a shame that sometimes he only spends five or ten minutes on a song." Steve Douglas examined those first public Brian Wilson songs in years and noticed that "there's some little hook or charm that really should be developed," but hasn't been

COURTESY OF NBC-TV

yet.

Brian's singing also became a matter of concern. In those early 1976 vocals, Brian sounded hoarse, and his vocals had a quality that reminded one friend of Randy Newman. Another friend noted, "Brian's been smoking like a chimney to get that husky sound. Also, he rushes everything. He doesn't want to be singing with all of them." Bruce Johnston feels that Brian's singing is in a lower register because "singing up high must represent some kind of anti-masculine macho thing to him, and that's why he stopped."

All of those reasons are part of it, but Brian himself explained the motivation behind the change this way. He noted that when he heard those early happy songs, "I'd cringe at some of the falsettos. 'I sang that?' It made me cringe because I realized where I was at, at that time, and I was in a very emotional place, very hung up, highly scared, fearful, and very withdrawn."

The strangest apsect of Brian's new public singing style is that, in private, Brian's falsetto is intact. It's a little thinner than it used to be, but otherwise as beautiful and expressive as ever. Brian's current public voice sometimes sounds like a cross between Louis Armstrong and Dean Martin, a gravelly, macho sound. In the studio, Brian can still sound like anyone he wants to sound like, including Brian Wilson. The most prominent examples of recent falsetto singing remain in the tape vaults; "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'" and "Sherry She Needs Me" have very good vocals.

15 Big Ones was released in June 1976, and it was treated with critical kid gloves by both the reviewers and the fans. It contained a top-ten hit single, "Rock 'n' Roll Music," the Beach Boys' first big hit since "Do It Again" in 1968. There was also another top-forty hit, "It's OK," which could have passed for "Do It Again, Part Two." The rest of the album is filled with a bizarre selection of oldies, odd new songs, and a *Sunflower* reject, "Susie Cincinnati." For some reason, the Beach Boys left much better material in the can. As Rick Nelson explains, "It was a case of fighting it out and coming up with some compromise. Mike wanted this and Carl wanted that. It's always like that."

Among the unreleased oldies that are better than what has been released are "Ruby Baby" (featuring a great vocal from Brian), "Come Go with Me" (an intriguing arrangement and powerful Carl Wilson vocal), and "Sea Cruise," which is a lot of fun. Also, there is an original mix of "Rock 'n' Roll Music" with clashing guitar licks and an extra verse that was remixed because Brian felt it wouldn't sound right on AM radios.

Even in its unfinished state, the record has a feel that had been missing from the Beach Boys' albums for years. This definitely is a Brian Wilson production. It's not something that can be articulated. It was just obvious that Brian was back at work. The problem was that because it was his first record in years, people were expecting a masterpiece. It wasn't, and the fans who had been patiently awaiting the return of Brian Wilson felt betrayed and disappointed following all the media hype and build-up. We were all expecting miracles too soon. "How can you turn it on after seven or eight years," Steve Douglas wondered, "and expect all this wonderful stuff to come out? I think he's trying not to let anybody down. Everyone's demanding stuff out of him, and he's trying to satisfy everyone."

Bruce Johnston is quite outspoken about the hype of '76. "I thought the whole 'Brian Is Back' campaign was disgusting, manipulative and disgusting. It's the wrong kind of career move, it's bad business. Everyone loves Brian so much. They were all waiting for this incredible game that was going to be played. And it was a real disappointment, that album, I think." In an insider's evaluation as to why *15 Big Ones* (and its followup, *The Beach Boys Love You)* aren't up to previous Beach Boys

standards, Bruce Johnston offers this explanation and excuse: "I think Brian decided about seven years ago that the Beach Boys were over. I think he decided, and then made the statement that he didn't want to carry on with it. But he was kind of forced over the years to keep it going, and I don't think he's done a very good job, because he's not really interested." As far as the Beach Boys are concerned, Bruce feels Brian is "a little bit emotionally and physically burned out. I don't think he wants to do it, but he's not a strong person that way. . . . I think he's doing something he doesn't want to."

Willingly or not, Brian is carrying on; some people claim that Brian is producing mediocre records in a perverse plan to destroy the Beach Boys so he can gain his freedom. Ben Edmonds, however, thinks that "if it was all just a game that he was playing, it would have

IRA RESNICK

stopped with *15 Big Ones*. I mean, that album was obviously the product of a damaged artist on some level. If he was in control, then that would have been a brilliant album as opposed to the half-baked piece of shit that it was." As for the sabotage theory, David Anderle feels that Brian is "just confused. I don't think Brian would purposely go out to ruin the Beach Boys, ever. Although he could. I don't think he would purposely go out to hurt any of his brothers, ever. Although he could. But not from a maniacal point of view or not even from a sitting-down-and-planning-it-out point of view. I don't think he would ever do any of that. Just like I don't think Brian would ever purposely create music that was less than what he could do. I think that Brian may be forced into doing things he's not ready to do. And the result may be what we hear. I think that maybe Brian at times has a real desire to want to get in there and do it."

Anderle watched the "Brian Is Back" campaign with a personal interest and his assessment was violent. "Disaster! Fucking disaster! Stupid. I couldn't believe what happened with the Brian Wilson renaissance. In the beginning I was real thrilled 'cause I thought this is all a reflection of his reappearance onto the scene. For a long time, I think we all felt that was actually what was happening; we were led to believe that was what was going on. Brian Wilson belongs in the music business, and I think that—not the business but music—can only benefit from Brian Wilson. But from Brian Wilson, not from the bastardized version of Brian Wilson, not from the skeleton version of Brian Wilson, not from the controlled version of Brian Wilson."

Next on Brian's schedule was the filming of a TV special produced by Lorne Michaels, the producer of "Saturday Night Live." Michaels felt that the Beach Boys were the perfect metaphor for California. The program, broadcast in August, looked like a lot of fun, except Brian was obviously suffering, particularly when he was made to surf or sing "I'm Bugged at My Old Man." It was marvelous and perverse entertainment to watch Brian in bed talking about his problems, or getting arrested for "Failing to Surf" and then being forced into the ocean to surf. Still, it seemed to be another instance of Brian's being put on public display, putting him through his paces.

Brian's next bout with the world came on the concert stage, a step that was really frightening to him. On July 2, at the Oakland Coliseum, Brian joined the group onstage after the first few songs; and on July 3 at Anaheim, Brian came out with the rest of the group. To even the most casual of observers, it was immediately evident how uncomfortable Brian was. He sat stock-still, as if he were frozen. He rarely sang or played the piano. When he did sing, his beautiful voice was lost in a nervous croak.

Midway through the concert, some fans in the crowd held up a banner which read, "Welcome Back, Brian." Mike Love exhorted Brian to stand up and take a bow, and wave to the fans. Brian dutifully half-rose, and waved his right hand like a giant bear's paw. The whole thing had the aura of a circus trainer's forcing one of his star animals to do his trick.

The return to the live performing did have an important goal behind it: the concerts were to show Brian how much he was loved, for him to bask in the glow of fan adulation. Rick Nelson remembers that Brian's nervousness only lasted for a few shows "where it was shaky, but that didn't last long. He started going over and playing bass and waving and talking to the kids. He really grew fast from that." Those benefits seemed transitory, and Brian's dislike for performing and the pain involved in playing before a big crowd appeared to overshadow the gains.

The first shows were embarrassing for all; the group's sound suffering because, as Rick Nelson notes, Brian would be at the piano, and he wouldn't even be playing the same songs. He was just so scared up there; I think he was unconscious of how bad it sounded. He was very nervous and very paranoid at concerts, but he was onstage. The group's love for him overcame the lessening of the quality of the show. I know Dennis was really inspired by that. I'm sure they were disappointed he didn't do very well, but happy to have him there. It generated a lot of excitement. Kids who were screaming for Brian didn't know about him. That was incredible too, to see a fourteen-year-old kid with a sign that says 'Welcome Back Brian.' They weren't

around when he was around." Besides all those benefits to Brian, Rick adds, "He was an angle to use for publicity that was fabulous."

Throughout the year, Brian dove headfirst into the world of media, and he was interviewed by dozens of relatively sensitive people. Brian's revelations were alarmingly honest, to his credit, but many of the journalists didn't exercise editorial responsibility, particularly when it came to discussion of Brian's sex life. Brian was generously sharing his innermost thoughts with the public, yet the guardians of the free press didn't always regard Brian with the respect he deserved as a human being, occasionally treating him as just this month's dissection.

There were three important TV appearances, besides the group's own special. First, there were the Rock Awards. Brian had been nominated for the "Hall of Fame," and when he came out with Dennis to present an award, he was greeted with a standing ovation. Brian: "The standing ovation was one of the highlights of my life. Without a doubt. I've never, I almost cried. I didn't expect it."

Next, Brian taped the Mike Douglas program, and in their interview, Brian bared his soul and troubles to the public in a touching and disturbing display of honesty. Brian described the handicap of his partial deafness, his difficulties in coming back and his long involvement with drugs: "I used to think that that was the positive way to go. I mean, drugs can be positive, but unfortunately there's usually a negative effect associated with drugs. A lot of hippies in the sixties said, 'The great messiah was supposed to come in the sixties and it came in the form of drugs.' Which I agree, there's a certain amount to be said for that. But in my personal story I have to tell, it really didn't work out so well, so positively, because I began to depend on the drugs. The cocaine was a beautiful high, I mean I could write songs, get in an elated state, but the comedown was *so* god-awful. You've got at least two hours of a high, but then you've got an hour and a half of nothing but garbage. It's called heaven and hell. I mean, drugs are a definite balance of heaven and hell, you go to heaven and then you go right to hell."

Mike Douglas wanted to know what brought Brian back. "My brothers encouraged me to get out of the sack. 'Come on, Brian, start writing, get off your butt.' . . . A little voice said, 'Hey, you're getting a little bit thin in the pocketbook' [Brian has earned millions], and I tend to react very personally to something like that. I'm a believer in monetary security, I believe that money can buy happiness, opposed to what a lot of people think. If you can get something with money that makes you happy, well then, by God, money made you happy. Let's face it, when you can get money, you're a lucky person, like I was. Drugs were expensive, but I could afford it. I can't afford it as much as I could. Thank God, I don't need them as much as I did." As Brian admitted, "I did my dose of LSD. It shattered my mind, and I came back, thank God, in I don't know how many pieces."

One of the most humorous moments in any of Brian's interviews took place when Brian gave a half-serious propaganda speech for Transcendental Meditation. In discussing his TM mantra, Brian noted that "you're not supposed to say a mantra, especially on national TV. Maharishi says keep it to yourself." Brian continued obliviously, "But mine is . . . ," and he revealed his mantra. Pow! It was like a little blow to Mike Love, who has been using the Beach Boys to sell TM for over a decade.

The experience was a positive one for Brian. He performed two songs, "Sloop John B" and "Back Home," and his voice was considerably better than it had been on *15 Big Ones*. Brian later recalled that it was "the first time I've ever done a talk show. I wasn't nervous. I thought I would be nervous. So I sort of knocked down some fear there. 'Fear Strikes Out' . . . It's good to know that there's an audience out there that can experience a Brian Wilson alone without the Beach Boys. It's good to know that you can . . . do these things, kind of individually . . . that you have the freedom. . . . I'm glad that they said I can step out of the Beach Boys. . . . I'm very proud of it."

In explaining his long absence from the music business, Brian noted that he saw himself "like some Maharishi in the hills, hibernating in his bed, snorting cocaine, meditating, all these weird things." It is a fascinating self-portrait, and like many of Brian's public revelations, it indicated a self-awareness that he is rarely credited with. Brian, in whatever troubled state he's in, has never forgotten what he was, what he is, and what he's done. Always enamored of his various masks, Brian once said that he was proud to have created so many legends.

The steps away from the Beach Boys were very small, dictated by Landy's control which caused a great deal of resentment from Brian. "I go through periods where I think, 'God, I'm thankful that I have a doctor,' you know? Then I go through periods where I think, 'Goddam, he's doing nothing but restricting my mind!' It's paradoxical, I know, and I feel an inner battle." As David Anderle theorized, "I think Brian just needs his mind."

Brian's behavior, unfortunately, was still filled with contradictions. All of his "eccentricity," whether it was put-on and/or real insanity, had come back to haunt him. Brian had created a vision of a "mad creative genius" and he was now being victimized by that image. Brian told David Rensin of *Oui* magazine, "Today, I want to go places . . . Danny Hutton's house, but I can't because of the doctor. I feel like a prisoner, and I don't know when it's going to end." Brian submitted to Landy's treatment because "he'd put the police on me if I took off . . . and he'd put me on the funny farm." Brian, who reportedly had briefly been hospitalized earlier in the decade, feared institutionalization more than almost anything. "He's always got that threat of putting me on the funny farm." If Brian needed institutionalization, then why wasn't he getting that treatment? And if he didn't, what kind of professional treatment allowed a patient to be told how to behave, "or else"?

Brian admitted that he was handling all those threats by "waiting it out, playing along. That's what I'm doing. . . . I have a pretty good poker face. . . . Do you have any uppers?" Brian's continuous "public" asking for drugs was another game. As one friend notes, "If he had really wanted to get drugs, he would have known where to get them." Landy's treatment of Brian wasn't penetrating Brian's game-playing. In one interview, Brian described Landy's ideas for self-nourishment and concluded his explanation with the comment, "I thought the guy was crazy."

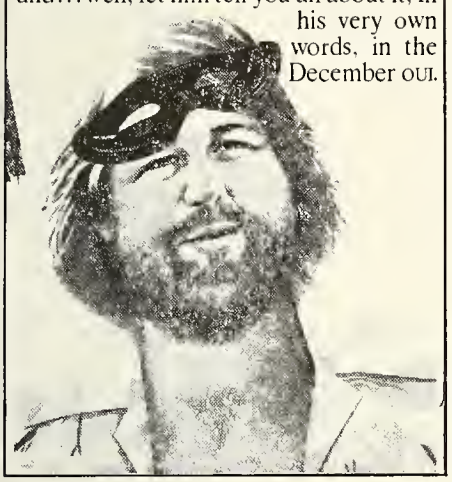
Landy's next move seemed to be one step too far for everyone as Brian guested on "Saturday Night Live" in late November. For the first time since the Leonard Bernstein special, Brian performed solo on national television (the Mike Douglas program was videotaped and wasn't shown until December). On Brian's 1967 appearance, he had introduced "Surf's Up" to the world. Nine years later, he played "Love Is A Woman," and it wasn't one of Brian's better performances. The really discom-

Beach Boy on the beach.
Whatever happened to Brian Wilson?

Funny you should ask.

OUI just happened to interview Brian and it seems Brian's spent the last four years in his bedroom. Alone.

Brian's been under doctor's care and... well, let him tell you all about it, in his very own words, in the December OUI.



forting part of the program was when Brian performed "Good Vibrations." Not that the vocal was bad. It was fascinating to see Brian alone at the piano singing one of his most famous songs, the way it must have been when he had finished writing a song and hadn't yet shared it with the world. What was cruel was that Brian sang the song seated at a piano in a giant sandbox. Trading on his legendary eccentricity, this making fun of Brian would have been amusing in 1966. Not only that, Dr. Landy was reportedly standing behind the camera and holding up cue cards for Brian with such directions as "Smile."

This appearance on "Saturday Night Live" brought outrage from Brian Wilson lovers everywhere. *Crawdaddy* magazine's Peter Knobler editorialized: "There was a moment on the telecast as he sang 'Love Is A Woman' when Brian hit a phrase and began to go with it. There, for maybe three seconds, you caught a glimpse of what Brian at one time could command at will. His voice moved the melody and the melody moved me." Despite that moment of lucidity, Knobler wondered, "where's the humanity of the people in charge of Brian's health? Brian doesn't need more solitude. But he certainly can do without public trials and humiliations—whether he is aware of them or not, we are, and the more one cares about both the music and well-being of this troubled giant, the more one has to wonder why he is being exhibited when he could be being helped." As David Anderle feels, "It was not something you do if you love him."

In the fall of 1976, Brian had actively returned to the studio, and he produced two complete albums of material, one to be titled *New Album* and the other called *Brian Loves You.* Earle Mankey engineered Brian's recording sessions, and he recalls that "Brian played nearly everything on the tracks himself, at least eighty percent of the instruments. On nearly every song, Brian was in the studio by himself, doing the basic tracks. A lot of the things he finished and sang all the parts himself. He was running smoothly. He just came in and did it. . . . When the guys came back from tour, they'd come in and sing vocal parts."

One of the best sessions was the recording of "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'." Earle Mankey remembers, "It was like the song was ingrained in his mind. He really had it down. He went through and played every part, without looking at the music or anything. And then he went out and sang the vocal all the way right through, singing both of the Righteous Brothers' parts." Earle describes Brian seated at the piano, singing the high and low parts. When he had a high part, he would lean to one side of the microphone; a low part, the other side; and when he got to the vocal conversation at the end of the song, his head was going back and forth pretty fast. It is a very good production and performance.

Brian was really beginning to come back. All the media noise was behind him, and he got down to the music. As Earle Mankey noted, "Now, when he records, it's his idea. Brian came [into the studio] and did it instead of being forced into it."

Brian had also resumed regular touring with the group by late November of '76. Rick Nelson remembers that "Brian made an agreement that he's a Beach Boy, and when they tour, he tours. There were times when the input was so spectacular from the audience," Nelson recalls, "that he was touched by it, and he said, 'That's the purpose of the music. That's really why I'm here.'"

Brian was also playing bass onstage for a couple of songs (including a wailing and impressively fun version of "Back Home") and Earle Mankey recounts how Brian rehearsed for the tour. "In the studio, he was ptacticing for playing live. He got out his bass, and he was playing in the studio, and he didn't have anything to play, so we put on the Ronettes' album, and he played every song on the album. That was his practice for playing on the road with the Beach Boys." Still, it wasn't totally voluntary on Brian's part. The concerts still scared him, and he was being forced into performing.

On December 31, 1976, the Beach Boys played their fifteenth anniversary concert at the Los Angeles Forum, and the capacity crowd reveled in the oldies. That show also included one of the early public indications that Brian was again sharing his personal music with the world. Even if the singing was off, the performance of a song called "Airplane" was exciting. It was a genuine thrill to hear a good, new song.

In late December, Dr. Eugene Landy was fired as Brian's psychologist/Svengali for reasons that remain unclear. Audree Wilson notes that "Dr. Landy did a lot of wonderful things for Brian. He, as many others have done, became very greedy. I think exceedingly greedy." Rick Nelson recalls, "They fired Landy because they thought he was going too far; they thought he wanted to manage the group. He was actually trying to get involved in selecting tunes for the album." The most curious element in the firing is the use of "they." If Landy was there to help Brian and had been hired by Marilyn, why did the group have the right to fire him?

As 1977 began, the Beach Boys were again splintering. Mike traveled to Switzerland for six months of meditation and levitation training with the Maharishi; Al returned to his Big Sur estate to enjoy the quiet life of a gentleman farmer. Dennis finished up his solo album, and Carl finally completed coproducing (with Billy Hinsche) a record by Ricci Martin (Dean's son), a project that had been begun in 1974.

That left Brian in the studio, mostly by himself, which was the way it had been in the "old days." Except that the early records had been made with a studio filled with musicians. Now, Brian seemed to be carrying the entire musical load. An electronic drum kit and a moog bass don't make up for the absence of Steve Douglas, Hal Blaine, Ray Pohlman, and company. Dennis and Carl did help on those sessions, but Mike and Al were rarely around. The result was a group of songs featuring the Wilson brothers that became most of an album called *Adult Child.* It included two beautiful ballads, "It's Over Now" and "Still I Dream of It." Those songs and a few others featured the string and horn arrange-

MICHAEL LIPMAN

ments of Dick Reynolds, who was the Four Freshmen's arranger and had arranged *The Beach Boys Christmas Album.*

In January of 1977, *The Beach Boys Love You* (the name was changed to make it seem more like a group effort) was submitted to Warner Brothers. Rick Nelson says, "Most of the people at the company liked it, but Mo Ostin thought that it should be touched up. He didn't think it was finished. It wasn't that he didn't like it musically. Somehow, word that Mo felt that way got back to Brian and hurt him deeply." It was the everyday insensitivity of the record business that had driven Brian away once; this time, he weathered the static.

Surrounding the latest Warner Brothers / Beach Boys battle were widespread rumors that the group would follow Dennis and sign with Jimmy Guercio's Caribou Records. There was even talk that Caribou / CBS Records might release *Love You.* Although Warners didn't particularly want "the product," they decided to release it on April 1. That very day, it was leaked to the *Hollywood Reporter* (by Warner Brothers?) that the Beach Boys had signed with Caribou Records. The timing was incredibly bad, and with the group now officially leaving the label, Warner Brothers put out very little promotional effort, and the record died a quick death.

The commercial disaster that was *Love You* can't really be blamed on lack of promotion, though. It was an uncommercial record, and as Mo Ostin had noted, unfinished. This time, however, it couldn't be put down to Brian's lack of patience. By now, there were lots of finished songs in the can. Excluding the oldies, there were very nice productions like "Lazy Lizzie," "Marilyn Rovell," and "Diane." The songs were considerably more sophisticated and fulfilling efforts compared to what was released. "Lazy Lizzie," in fact, includes the "Pied Piper" theme from Brian's *Holland* fairy tale, but "Lizzie" is a fully realized production as well as a strong example of Brian's songwriting ability.

Love You, in its incomplete form, is still a personal album from Brian, almost a solo record. Even the teenage themes that Brian examined were those that he still related to, although there was some indication that he was being "asked" to write songs that would appeal to teens. On side two, Brian had composed a number of songs that were directly related to his current existence, and these lyrics were more interesting. The best combination of words and music occurred in "The Night Was So Young," which included a heartfelt story and a soaring, if still slightly thin, falsetto line from Brian. The ending harmonies on "I'll Bet He's Nice" were especially reminiscent of the fullness of *Sunflower,* and "Let's Put Our Hearts Together" was a touching, if slightly banal ballad.

The album also contained Brian Wilson music that indicated he hadn't lost his love of the eccentric or his musical sense of humor. Both "Johnny Carson" and "Ding Dang" (at last) were obviously the products of only one person—Brian Wilson—and his remarkable and delightful musical lunacy.

As winter melted into spring, the Beach Boys began to gear up for another big summer, but all the career momentum of the previous year had been dissipated. The decline happened very quickly; *15 Big Ones* hadn't been nearly as big as anticipated, and the TV special broadcast in August had been the peak of the group's media hype. There were no cover stories on the Beach Boys in 1977, although interest in Brian Wilson was still relatively high. The Beach Boys had missed their chance to reestablish themselves firmly as ongoing artists, and their concerts seemed to be mired in the backstage battle over whether to play oldies or newer material.

As the group began rehearsals for a European / English tour, Mike was still in Switzerland, Carl's back was again giving him trouble, and Dennis was working night and day on his solo music. The practice sessions for the tour were extensive, and there seemed to be the promise

LESTER COHEN

At the L.A. Forum: Above (from left to right): Charles Lloyd, Mike, Al, and Ed Carter. Left, Brian: "All I want is something new . . . physical health . . . something that feels like life, or anything."

LESTER COHEN

LESTER COHEN

LESTER COHEN

Rehearsing for England, June 1977. Left, Brian is watched by bodyguard-companions Stan Love and Rocky. About her sons, Audree Wilson says, "Their relationship has been very off and on. At times they've been very close. . . . They care very much about each other."

of a new musical excitement. Dennis was going to have his own spot within the show to perform some of his songs, and the group was also going to perform tunes from the forthcoming *Adult Child* album.

What happened next was a disaster for the group. They canceled their European tour, giving reasons that didn't seem to jibe with the reality of the situation, since the group then traveled to London to play at the CBS Records convention. After "postponing" the tour due to "lack of preparation," it was a real slap in the face to the overseas fans when the Beach Boys played a show for the record industry. Those fans had supported the Beach Boys faithfully through the bad years, and they were disillusioned by the group's actions.

Bruce Johnston was at the CBS convention. According to Bruce, the show "wasn't a disaster for the audience. They loved the Beach Boys." From Bruce's point of view, "you had an insider watching the band, knowing too much to enjoy it. The band was stiff, was not ready to be doing a concert, but there they were.

"Brian looked like he was drugged, not that he was, but he was just in some strange state, and Mike was a little uncomfortable, and then later that night [during the concert], I saw Mike get upset at Brian in front of all these people. It was just very unpleasant. I saw [Brian's] piano moving. I don't know if it was toward Brian or toward the stage." One member of the touring band recalled, "It was unbelievable, Mike started lifting the piano like he wanted to pick it up and drop it on Brian. The guy can really act crazy. He had just come back from six months of meditating, and was supposed to be more evolved, but he freaked out there on the stage." Rick Nelson explained that Mike had a "girlfriend who was killed in a car wreck toward the end of the six months, and I think that sort of startled him into reality real quick."

As Rick Nelson (himself a TM teacher) observes, Mike "still has a bad temper and gets hostile, but the only thing I ever thought about that was 'imagine if he never meditated.'"

That incident was only one public display of the continuing war among the Beach Boys. The release and subsequent success of Dennis Wilson's fine debut solo album created much jealousy among the non-Wilson faction in the band. Their feeling seemed to be, "OK, Dennis, you have a solo career, now leave the Beach Boys to us." As Audree Wilson notes, "Mike and Al have always had a competitive thing with the Wilson brothers. I think the Wilson brothers have always been a threat to them in some way, like they had too much power."

The group's management set-up became the next battlefield, with Dennis insisting that Steve Love be ousted as the group's business manager. All the problems came to a head at the end of the American tour in the late summer of

1977. When the blowup was reported in *Rolling Stone,* the talk of a Beach Boys breakup became pervasive.

This latest fight wasn't over the petty things that had caused scuffles in the early days, nor over the artistic issues that had rocked the group in later years. This one was a very basic disagreement between the two factions in the group, Mike and Al on one side, Carl and Dennis on the other, and Brian, very much in the middle, as always, just wanting to make music and not be bothered with the corporate affairs.

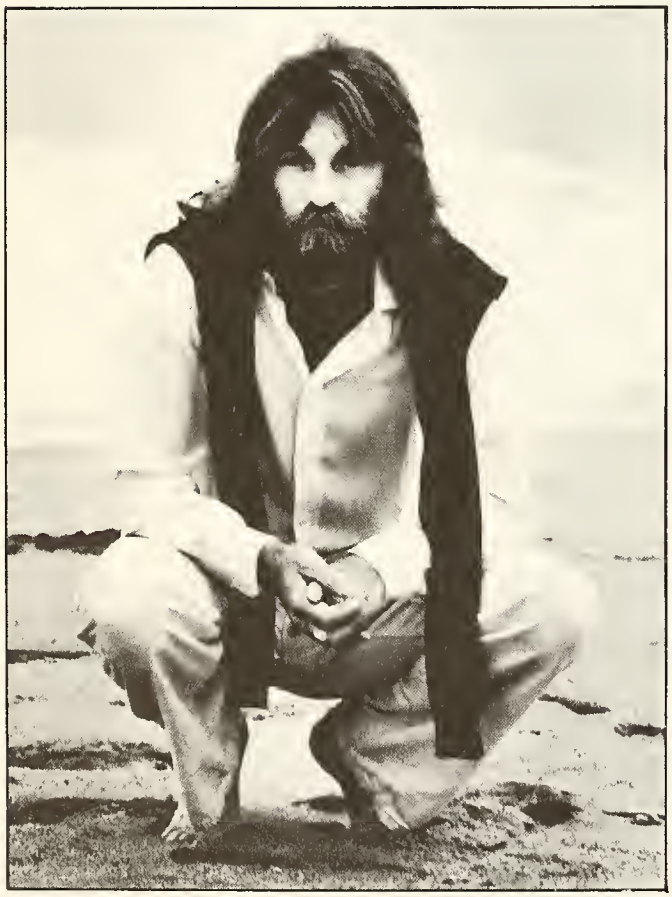
The Wilson brothers had once enjoyed control over the direction of the group because in the four-man corporation, they had three of the votes. With Brian often absenting himself from the proceedings, Dennis and Carl got their way by virtue of a two-to-one vote. In the mid-70s, Al Jardine finally became a member of the corporation, and the voting now would be split two against two, with Brian holding the decisive vote and almost always refusing to break the deadlock in non-musical matters. When Brian was pressured for a business decision, he often left town. Other times, the pressure would be unbearable and Brian would just give his vote to Mike to stop all the hassles.

In August, Mike Love gained control of the group, and the messy breakup took place in September, with Mike and Al threatening to replace Carl and Dennis with two other musicians. It wasn't the first time the group had disbanded, and it wouldn't be the last, but it was probably the most bitter fight. Also, it was the first time that the public got a real glimpse of the Beach Boys' dirty laundry.

The much-reported split in the group almost cost the group their Caribou/CBS Records multi-million dollar contract, but it was saved by reaching a very uneasy truce. It was another example of how money, rather than family, was the chief binder in keeping the group together. The public and private hostility was more blatant than ever, but the "harmonious" Beach Boys somehow stayed together. Or in the words of one inside observer, "The Beach Boys have managed to exist all these years in spite of themselves."

The fall of 1977 was a busy time for the Beach Boys as the group's always complicated business puzzle took on added wrinkles. Mike Love and Charles Lloyd (with help from Al Jardine) formed a group called "Waves" and gave a number of benefit concerts to raise money for the Age of Spiritual Enlightenment, an offshoot of the International Meditation Society. Transcendental Meditation, which the group had often credited with helping them over the stresses of career problems and family fights, was ironically the new devisive factor. Mike Love was now running the group and he proceeded to get rid of almost all the non-meditating members of the Beach Boys' touring band, people and musicians who had loyally worked for the group for years.

The musicians were replaced by meditators, and Mike and Al holed up in Fairfield, Iowa, the home of Maharishi International University, where they had set up a studio for the purpose of producing Transcendental Meditation-oriented records. They flew Brian to Iowa to produce records for them. Working all fall, Brian wrote a lot of new material. One informed source reports that the new songs were not very good and will never be released. Another of Brian's friends offers the explanation, "Brian didn't want to be there with Mike and Al, so naturally the music wasn't very good." There were also a half-dozen



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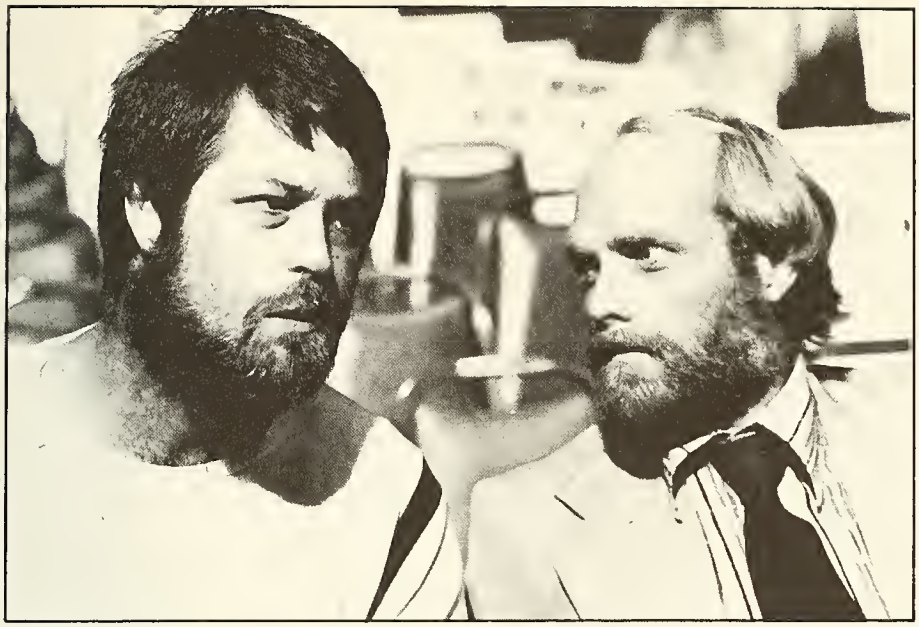
COURTESY OF THE BEACH BOYS



COURTESY OF THE BEACH BOYS

songs (including "California Feeling") recorded with American Spring that might some day be on a new album by that dormant group. Those songs are reportedly excellent, and as Marilyn and Diane noted in a recent interview, they can't reveal the names of the songs because "The Beach Boys are dying to get them, but we are going to keep them for ourselves."

There was still no word of a Brian Wilson solo album. Brian explained the problem. "They want to keep the material for the Beach Boys; a solo album would take away from the Beach Boys' sales."

Despite that observation, Brian continued working on a lot of personal material that belongs only on a Brian Wilson album. The two most exceptional new songs (written in late '76 / early '77) are both stark and darkly sung love ballads. They are the most personal tunes Brian has recorded since "'Til I Die."

It's Over Now

The flame of love we had has
finally died
Can't take this emptiness it left inside
It's Over Now
And though I played the role
I lost my soul
It's still within your heart ©

"Still I Dream of It" contains the chorus:

Still I dream of it
Of that happy day
When I can say
I've fallen in love
And it haunts me so
Like the dream that's somehow linked
To all the stars above
I'll find my world
Someday, I'll find my world ©

These were the kind of songs that Brian had been writing all along and hadn't been sharing with the world.

SHARON WEISZ

As 1977 came to an end, Brian was still trapped within the Beach Boys' whirlwind, unhappily performing in concert and disinterestedly making mediocre records. The group's traditional sixteenth anniversary concert in Los Angeles on December 27th was one of the worst shows they'd ever given, and the bitterness and hostility within the band was so thick that even the harmonies failed to cut through. Twice, when songs were played that Mike or Al had written, Dennis stalked offstage, the second time taking Brian with him. Mike Love brought his three sisters onstage, making it four Loves and only one Wilson (Carl). Mike told the audience, "This kind of evens things up for all those years" when he'd been outnumbered.

The group's singing wasn't at all lively, and the oldies were flat. One writer commented that it "looked like they were giving their final concert." Brian's discomfort was more than obvious; if the point of his being onstage was to soak up love from the audience, that had been accomplished long ago, and now the concerts had just become a torturous chore. Brian was back with the Beach Boys, but he certainly didn't seem to be a willing participant.

The two albums that Brian has produced since his return have been forced out of him, and that is one reason they aren't polished gems. Both records are very difficult to listen to unless you are involved in Brian Wilson's musical and personal psychodramas. As one friend of Brian's noted, "The records are interesting only when the content is taken within the context of Brian's life. I love those records, but then, I'm biased."

The new music that Brian has created which remains unreleased is a strong indication that he is planning to share himself with the world; but his personal

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ife seems to be a very confusing situa-ion. Brian Wilson still lives in his own personal haunted house, and it does not appear that any steps are being taken to alleviate his difficulties. The solution, according to one friend, lies mostly within Brian. "Brian must respect someone before he can let that person help him. The support he got from people he respected is what drove him to the heights of creativity. He needs that kind of support to get well as a human being, and the people around him aren't giving it to him. Not because they don't want to. They just don't understand him. Brian does not think he's worthy of good things, so he's surrounded himself with people who are using his talent to make money for themselves. Have any of those people ever said to him that he is a good human being, that he is a kind and gentle and special person? I don't think so.

LESTER COHEN

"Brian *is* a special person, but until he really believes that, he isn't going to get much better. Most of that knowledge must come from himself. The rest has to come from his brothers, his family, his friends, even a doctor. Whatever. Until Brian is treated as a human being instead of a moneymaker, nothing will change."

What makes the entire situation so complicated is that, as David Anderle explains, "Like Howard Hughes or other people like that, Brian is so dominating. In his whatever state, nobody is going to mess with Brian. Who the hell's going to, which one of those guys in the band is really going to mess with Brian? None of them, for fear that he may be faking it. I can't see any of those guys dealing with Brian at all."

In trying to understand Brian, there remain two unanswerable questions—What is left of Brian's talent and how much damage has he suffered as a

human being? Cursory observations will reveal that Brian at times is totally lucid; other times, he appears to be totally out of touch with reality. A number of Brian's close friends insist that Brian is in control of his situation, and is pretending to be crazy. Dennis Wilson's comments show the contradictions inherent in any analysis of Brian Wilson's psyche. "Brian is crazy. Brian is fine. Brian is my master. Brian has real problems." How much of Brian's behavior is evidence of a real "problem," and how much of it is an act? Regardless of the cause of the unusual behavior, his comeback on a personal level is nothing short of heroic.

At one December '77 concert, Brian left the security of his piano and played bass the entire show, the first time he's done that since 1964. On another night, Brian was so bored that he played the wrong songs to amuse himself. The band, however, was not amused.

That boredom, though, is possibly the best indication that Brian is really coming back. The initial shocks over his return to a "normal" existence are wearing off, and Brian appears ready to confront all the problems that have held him back the past dozen years. Those problems center on the Beach Boys. It will be

COURTESY OF THE BEACH BOYS

difficult for the group to face up to Brian. For nine years, their public pronouncements claimed that "Brian is fine. He's always writing and some day soon, he's going to stretch out again and really shock everybody." There was never any public admission on the group's part that Brian was lonely or troubled or hurt or that he might have desired to be released from his Beach Boys obligations.

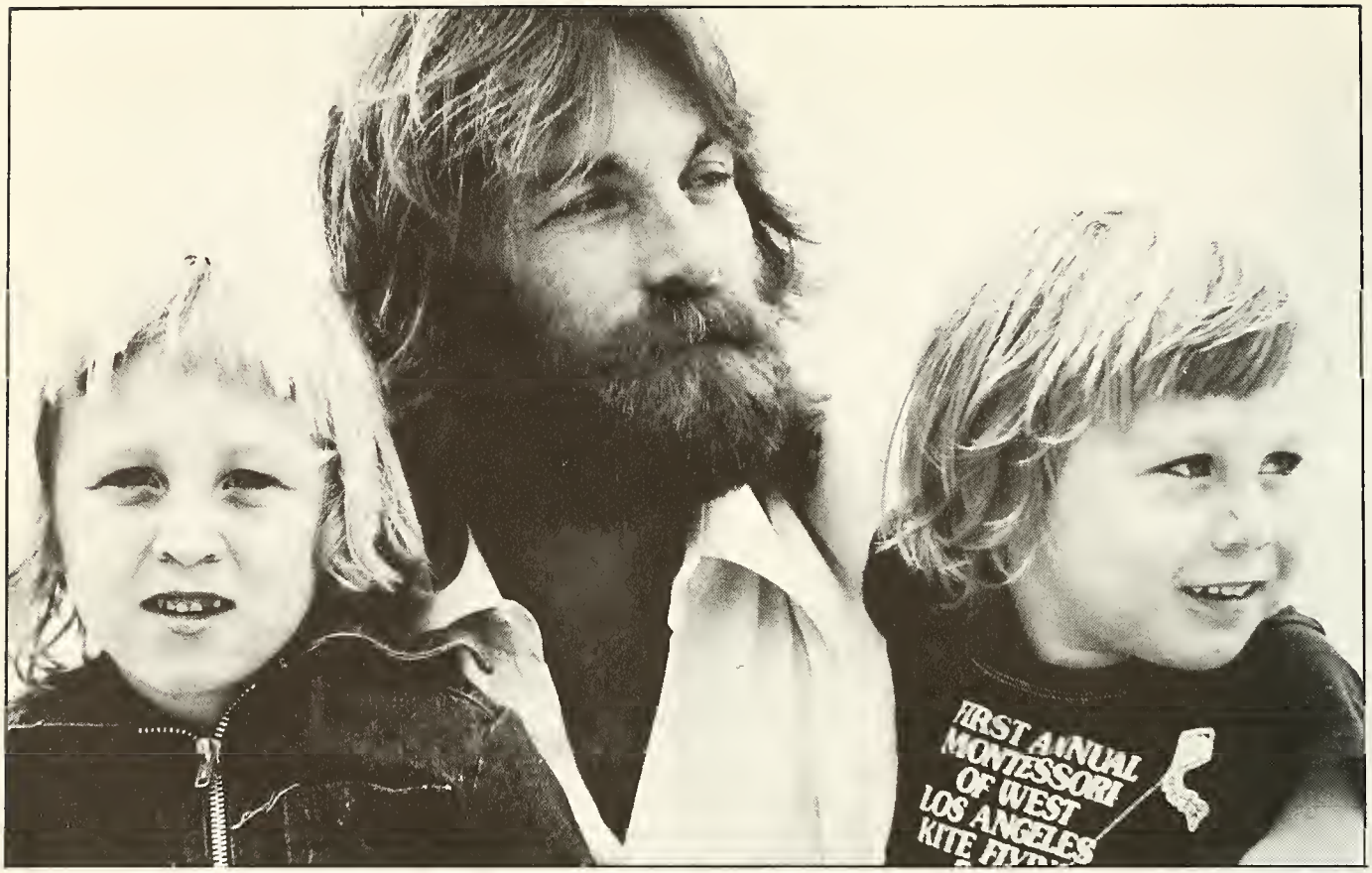
One friend of Brian's explains this blindness. "For them, there is a terror involved in the Beach Boys ending . . . a basic fear of survival as to whether they could make it without the Beach Boys. It's all they've ever known, and they went from being kids to being Beach Boys. They've had to do their growing-up within their career, and it has been very hard. Carl has been a Beach Boy for more than half his life. Almost the same with Dennis. They've never known anything else. That is why they couldn't allow Brian to break free."

This disregard for Brian hasn't been malicious. Brian Wilson has always been an enigma, even to his family. David Anderle thinks their insensitivity toward Brian "is based on a Hawthorne mentality . . . the surfer mentality. Insensi-

Opposite top, Marilyn and Brian at the 1977 Rock Awards. Opposite bottom, The Beach Boys played for several hundred thousand people in a free concert at Central Park, September 1977. Below, Onstage in Hawaii, March 1978.

ED ROACH

ED ROACH



ED ROACH

Above (from left to right): Michael, Dennis, and Carl, Dennis' two sons from his second marriage. Opposite top, Bruce Johnston, James William Guercio, and Dennis. Right, The tape library at Brother Studio is filled with unreleased songs. They include: "Princess of the Rain," "Why Don't You Try Me," "11th Bar Blues," "Clangin'," "Good Timin'," "Been 'Way Too Long," "(My) Solution," "Short Skirts," "Let's Dance," "Hey There Momma," "They're Marching Along," "Love To Be Your Lover," "Hold On," "Leaves of Grass," "Magic Hands," "I'm Going Your Way," "We Gotta Groove," "Loop De Loop," "That Special Feeling," "Raspberries and Strawberries," "San Miguel," "Life Is For The Living," "Hey Little Tomboy," "H.E.L.P.," "Everyone's Gotta Live," "Lines," "Baseball," "Marilyn Rovell," and "Diane." Oldies recorded in 1976 and 1977 that remain unreleased: "Mony, Mony," "Michael Row The Boat," "Peggy Sue," "Runnin' Bear," "Shake, Rattle, and Roll," "On Broadway," "Deep Purple," "Shortnin' Bread," "Battle Hymn of the Republic," and "Gimme Some Lovin'." Unreleased American Spring tracks: "Honeycomb," "California Feeling," and "Heaven." Among the dozens of songs Dennis has recorded in the past few years: "Tug of Love," "Carl's Song," "Barnyard Blues," "Baby Blue Eyes," "Time For Bed," "I Didn't Mean To Make You Worry," "He's A Bum," and "I Found Myself in a Wild Situation."

COURTESY OF THE BEACH BOYS

SHARON WEISZ

WALTER MICHEL

tive to other people, to an extent insensitive to what Brian was going through. I don't think they're stupid. I just don't think they know too much. I just feel that their approach to the present of that presence is extremely narrow, therefore shallow. I just never had a sense of them being real worldly."

Bruce Johnston, a Beach Boy for seven years and always a knowledgeable observer of the scene, thought that Brian "was always surrounded by a bunch of average, ordinary, monaural group of friends. They're the sort of people who if they didn't know how to swim, would probably take a shower instead of taking a chance. Brian's genius is sort of vertical, which is great when he is locked in the studio. And, this is my opinion, I always felt that because of them, the rest of it is horizontal. There are all these nice ordinary bowling-league people in his life who would never go 'Great!' for the right reasons or stimulate him, encourage him to reach beyond some of his lyrics or these ideas that he throws out. Most of the people who have always been around Brian are maybe related, I don't mean the brothers, but distant cousins and things, people who somehow got on the payroll and sort of keep him company."

Where does all this leave Brian? David Anderle: "I have no idea what Brian is left with. I just keep getting Howard Hughes vibes. This guy just tucked away somewhere with all these people doing business for him. And no matter what condition he's in, everybody is still fearing him. That's the way I see Brian Wilson. Yes, I can see the parallel between the eccentricity of Howard Hughes and the eccentricity of Brian Wison. But I'm saying that behind the eccentricity is the power of a *human being!* That awesome power that is there, whether Brian exercises it or not. And the fear that power causes in other people around him 'cause Brian does do that, even with his family." Still, Anderle feels that Brian must be suffering, even if he is playing a game. "I can't believe a person could be putting on and going through the agony he must be going through. I mean, he's not having fun, is he? He's not having a good time." One friend of Brian's explains that "he has amazing adaptability. No matter how bad the situation, he manages to survive."

Epilogue

Aside from the personal issues at stake, it is very hard to understand why Brian Wilson would be forced to play a charade that he is a Beach Boy, almost fourteen years since he quit the road and over ten years since he stopped producing their albums. In many respects, Brian's current situation is much like the conflict that engulfed him during *Smile*. Brian himself stated, "Sometimes, I really feel like a commodity in a stock market." Brian indicated that he wants "freedom and I want to do my own album. Either I'm going to stay and produce only their stuff or go on my own and do an album by myself . . . I haven't decided which to do yet." Just as in 1967, there seems to be no reasonable compromise in the Beach Boys situation, and the same issue exists. There doesn't seem to be any reason why Brian couldn't do both, produce the Beach Boys and make records of his own. If that were what he wanted.

Van Dyke Parks asked this rhetorical question of *Crawdaddy*'s Tim White: "Don't you think that the man has done enough for the industry that he could put out his own album? . . . I do. . . . I would say in any court in the land that you would find Brian Wilson is quite sane, capable, ready, willing and able to put out an album. . . . He would want to, but it's not in the works." People like Van Dyke Parks and Danny Hutton, once inside but now banished from Brian's presence, feel that Brian is trapped. Brian's strengths as a musician have never tanslated to other parts of his life. He can lead in the studio, but when it comes to standing up for his personal freedom, he backs down. As one close friend admitted, "That's the one aspect of Brian I have trouble understanding or accepting. I love everything else about him, but I find it hard to cope with the fact that he's just sitting back and not fighting his way out of the trap."

It would not be an easy thing for Brian Wilson to break out of the Beach Boys. How do you leave the Ford Motor Company when you're Henry Ford? Career wise, the move would be easy, and there are many record industry people who are standing by, ready to help and publicly applaud the move. For Brian, it is a personal move of incredible significance and would involve his leaving the security of his present life. Brian is not a person who seeks out trouble. He creates it, he is a magnet for it, but he also doesn't enjoy not being free.

Most of the people who want Brian to make the music that is in his head believe that Brian will never create that important music within the Beach Boys situation. They all firmly believe that when Brian decides he's had enough, and that he wants to run his own life, then he will leave the group.

Daryl Dragon feels that if Brian is ever going to get back "to that creative thing again, I think what he needs is a spark for writing. The excitement is gone; I think the family's been together too long, has been a business too long, you know?" Many of those who have loved Brian Wilson's music through the years think that Brian's music is too important to be tied into a group formula for making hit records and paying the bills. Again, Daryl Dragon: "A lot of people who have natural gifts can't take criticism. Brian should be out on an island, playing for natives, writing music for kids to be happy and not worrying about people saying things about him, putting him down for 'Let's Go Surfing.' He's not writing on that level, he's writing on a gift level."

Bruce Johnston: "My idealistic solution would be that someone should go and get Brian a grant. Brian is a serious musician. Someone should commission a live performance and masterworks recording of Brian's [future] music for orchestra or a combination of orchestra and voices . . . do something that's adult Brian Wilson instead of trying to recapture the things Brian's already done. They [the Beach Boys] should allow him to grow and go ahead. I'm sure he has something to say [musically]. . . . At this point in Brian's life, I think he should be making music and not worrying about making records . . . maybe a commissioned work in a three-year period that would be underwritten. I think that if you took away the 'make it in the old mold, make it commercial' pressure from Brian, he might come out with something incredible." Bruce feels that Brian doesn't know how to ask for his freedom. "I don't think he knows how to pull it off. He's kind of trapped." Brian's leadership ability, Bruce claims, is "all in one area. His 'Here's what we should do' is mainly in his music."

Steve Douglas: "He's a great musician. What I'm sure has been a big problem in his head is all these people that are dependent upon him coming through. Maybe he'll get off wanting to make Beach Boys records. He should make his own records. Maybe he'll get to the point where he'll make records with other kinds of music and it won't necessarily be Beach Boys-oriented. I think of Brian as a great orchestrator. . . . I think he could do a fabulous symphony of some kind. It would be great if he would put all those orchestrating and arranging chops into a full symphony—it would be astounding."

Many people understand the importance of Brian's musical freedom, and they all hope that the Beach Boys will soon allow Brian to create whatever he wants to. Those same people, however, feel that the family won't let go. As one friend noted, "What else can they do? Dennis has a lot of talent, and Carl could sing on records, but otherwise, they'd be lost. They've been Beach Boys almost all their lives." Brian Wilson is the Beach Boys, even in his unwilling, disinterested state. His musical creation has been responsible for well over 90 percent of the group's gross income, which has reached into the multi-millions. "It is their egos that won't let Brian go," another friend claims. "They could tour without him; they have for years. And they should keep touring, if that's what they want to do. Just leave Brian alone." The Beach Boys have made and continue to make most of their money from touring. There doesn't seem to be any legitimate reason for Brian to be part of the nostalgia show.

Brian Wilson has earned the right not to be part of that parade. He earned that more than a dozen years ago. He's made all the Beach Boys and his family very rich.

The Beach Boys themselves have been almost totally responsible for keeping Brian's music in front of the public for all these years. Their perpetual touring in the face of incredible difficulties, both personal and financial, is an example of tremendous perseverance. The Beach Boys *have* stayed together through all the fights and problems, and that is very much to their credit. If the Beach Boys had quit back in 1969, it might have been many years before the music of Brian Wilson again became important. With the group performing in-concert, the revitalized interest in Brian Wilson only took a half-dozen years.

Besides the entertainment value of the Beach Boys music, Brian has created a type of popular music that influenced much of what has been created in the past dozen years. Groups like Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, Queen, the Electric Light Orchestra, 10 CC, and many others have all incorporated Beach Boys harmony into their music. It was Brian and the Beach Boys who established the validity of harmony in rock music. In addition to all of that, Brian's creation of a California Myth has had a significant sociological impact.

What should be understood is that this book isn't aimed at minimizing the importance of the Beach Boys' contribution. The group has given the world sixteen years of joy, and Brian's work with the band has often resulted in artistic achievement that stands out above much of the world of popular culture. What is sad is that the Beach Boys group always came before the individuals. All of their personal problems, Brian's included, have been secondary to keeping the group together.

Audree Wilson admits, "There have been times when I thought, 'Is it really worth it?' I think about Carl, he really missed out on his teenage years. He was fourteen years old, and Dennis was sixteen, and that's so young. They've all had their share of glory and the good life, but money does not buy happiness. I know that."

Many people have been waiting patiently and faithfully for many years for Brian to become an artist again, as opposed to a benefactor. Few people realized the seriousness of Brian's personal difficulties or the complexities of the situation. There are no easy answers for the Beach Boys or for Brian Wilson.

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Above, Mike; below, Brian. Van Dyke Parks: "You can quote Hugh Downs on Jack Paar. 'He isn't inflicted with mental illness. He is a carrier.' I think that's a good thing to say about Brian. . . . For two Christmases in a row, Brian has come over to my home. On those two occasions, I found no difference between the Brian Wilson I saw then, and the Brian for whom I worked so long ago. No difference. Brain damage? Hell no. I've seen those bumper stickers. I don't stop for Brian Wilson. . . . I think the guy can afford to sit it out. . . . Sooner or later, he's going to see a project that ignites his interest, and he's going to hit it. . . . I believe that he will have a lot of public interest in his favor to command the attention that it will take to catapult him into the center ring, if he wants it again. At this point, I should imagine he is bored. Why, I don't know. It may have something to do with the Louis B. Mayers of the record industry, those awful people. . . . I used to think he was very, very strong. . . . As a friend of mine who is also a very close friend of Brian's said, and it may be true, 'Brian is spineless.' I'd like to catch Brian out in the yard so I could get into a little kickass with him, to be quite frank. I think he's misbehaved. It's as simple as that. He's just very talented, and . . . I think he's perpetrated a great myth."

There are no easy answers for any artists. The people around Brian were doing what they thought was best for all, as misguided as their ideas often appeared to be. The only aspect of this tale that has a right or wrong is that Brian Wilson needs love and support as a human being, and he doesn't seem to be getting it. The rest of it is, of course, very judgmental, and everyone has his own motivations for seeing the story as he does.

Bruce Johnston wishes for "an incredibly funded foundation" that would pay for artists like Brian to make music. Once, many years ago, Brian Wilson himself created that very foundation. It's called the Beach Boys, Incorporated. In 1967, it could have been the base for Brian to branch out from, but in 1978, it has become the anchor that holds him back.

In late 1967, David Anderle observed, "The next big Brian Wilson thing will not happen with the Beach Boys." There hasn't been a "big" Brian Wilson happening in the ensuing eleven years, in or outside of the group. Brian wasn't even a Beach Boy for many years, but, as Anderle notes, "He hasn't been anything else."

Before any new creation begins, though, Brian must be respected as a human being. Then he must be freed as an artist. The first is much more important. Even if Brian Wilson never writes another note of music, or chooses never again to share his music with the world, he has already left the world an incredible legacy of his creations, music that has made millions of people around the world happy.

NAN BARR

Acknowledgments

I am greatly indebted to the close friends of Brian Wilson who have helped me to begin to understand this complex man. They have taken me through the maze of public pronouncements by Brian and the Beach Boys, so that I could tell fact from public relations. In 1976, Brian said, "Interviews are for publicity." Because of statements like that, the assistance of a handful of Brian's friends has been invaluable. It is through those people, some of whom have contributed anonymously, that this book has been constructed. Besides those who have remained nameless, I especially want to thank four people who have spent countless hours with me in recreating Brian's life and the Beach Boys' career. They are Rich Sloan, Fred Vail, David Anderle, and Bruce Johnston. I also want to thank everybody who patiently and generously shared their time and memorabilia with me.

Special thanks to . . .

Holly Graham for her friendship, support, patience, and editorial perspective which makes her contribution incalculable and the most important.

Robbie Leff for his friendship, help, and for listening to my endless talk about Brian and the Beach Boys.

Jon Goodchild for his patience, design skills, and support of me and this project.

Bruce Johnston and Michele Myer for the use of their personal collections.

Richard Bernacchi for his advice and support throughout.

My family for their support in my travails and travels. And to Ricky Leaf too.

Earl Leaf, Jules Siegel, Paul Williams, Tom Nolan, and David Felton. Your efforts were an important part of the creation of the Brian Wilson legend and provided me with my first insight into and appreciation of Brian.

Peter Reum for the generous sharing of his extensive photographic and memorabilia collection, for his collector's knowledge, and interest in this book and its accuracy.

Michael Patterson, Dwight Whikehart, Angela Jones, Liz Jones, Stephen Neill, Derek A. Bill, and Toni Lorenz for their research assistance.

Ray Lawlor, Ed Mandlebaum, Duke Janukowicz, and Dave Marano for their devotion to Brian, support of this book, and research assistance.

Jeannie Sakol and Stephanie Bennett for their guidance, help, encouragement, and for the opportunity. And to Grosset & Dunlap for their support and the artistic freedom they have given me.

Thank you to . . .

David Rensin, Richard Cromelin, Lou Irwin, Timothy White, Dave Herman, Ken Barnes, the BBC, Neal Gabler, Steven Gaines, Ben Edmonds, Tom Smucker, Alan Betrock, Gene Sculatti, and many other writers for their groundwork in interviewing Brian and the Beach Boys family. Their efforts were essential in piecing this puzzle together.

Capitol Records, Warner Brother Records, Brother Records, and to the Beach Boys Organization for their generous help. All the photographers and artists whose contributions are so valued. Pete Fornatale for playing the music.

The following people, who in some way, all contributed to this project: Ellen Vogt, Greg Biggs, Skip Brittenham, Henry Fetter, John Branca, Dean Torrence, Tricia Roach, Karen Handman, Chris Kable, Ed Roach, Jan Bridge, Ron Furmanek, Peter Kanze, Scott Bergstein, Bill Johnson, Rodney Bingenheimer, Harvey Kubernik, Lester Cohen, Jeff Gold, Ray D'Ariano, Barry Bernstein, Alice, LuCindi Templeton, Sally Rose, Roger Young, Jim Bickhart, Arlene Colbert, Steven Peeples, Ray Taylor Jr., Stephen Peters, Marty Taber, Brian Gari, Tim Blixt, Michael Ochs, Steve Resnik, Suzie Shaw, Jack and Billie Schwartz, Janice Tweedy, Jan Holdenfield, Warren Seabury, the Pitaliks, the Hatcheteers, David Poleno, Richard Hart, Ted Krever, Bob Jenkins, Gareth Pawlowski, Teri Brown, Bob Jenkins, Jasper Dailey, Lanny Aldrich, and Robert Clancy.

Brian and the Beach Boys for all the joy their music has given me.

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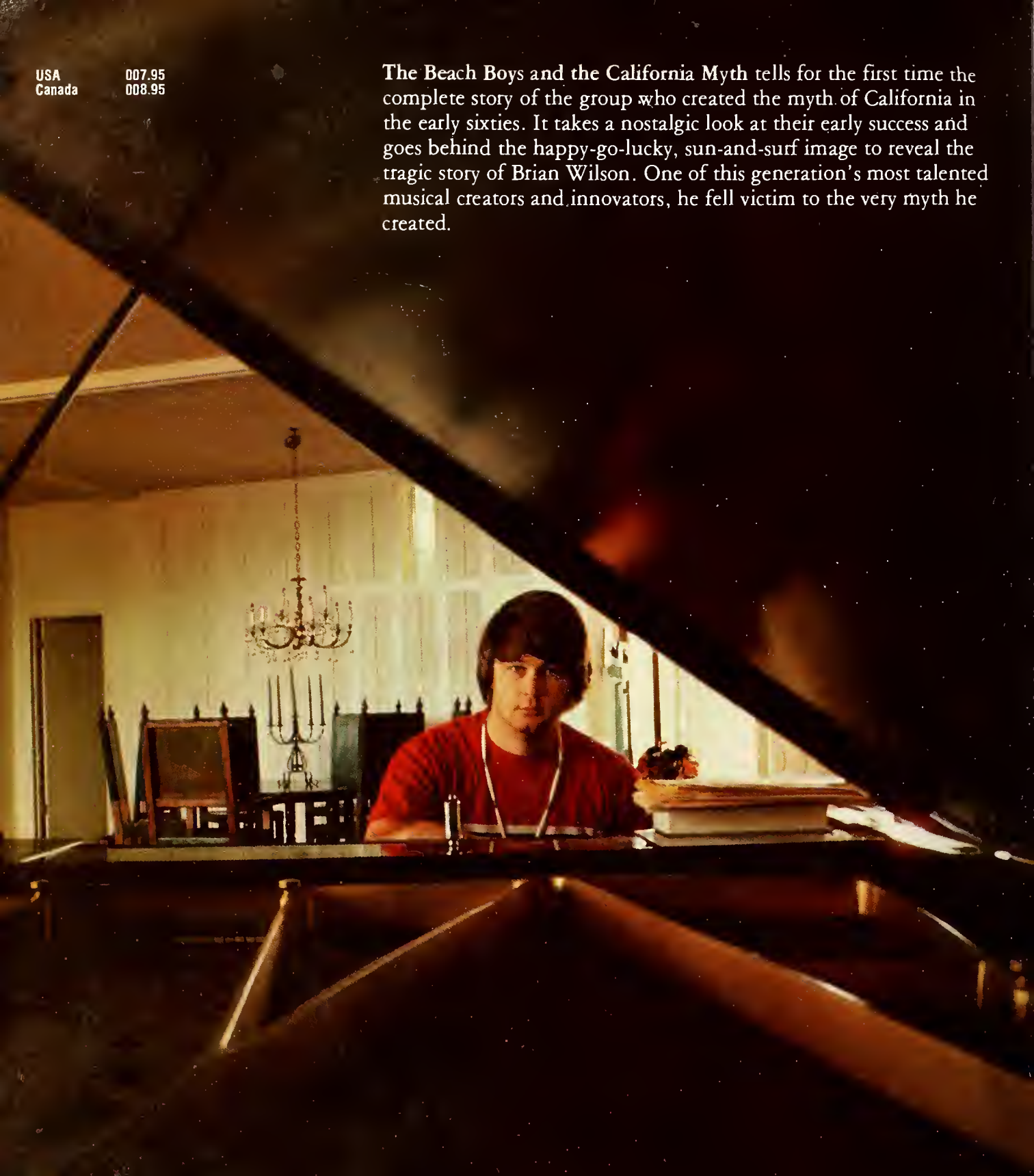
The Beach Boys and the California Myth tells for the first time the complete story of the group who created the myth of California in the early sixties. It takes a nostalgic look at their early success and goes behind the happy-go-lucky, sun-and-surf image to reveal the tragic story of Brian Wilson. One of this generation's most talented musical creators and innovators, he fell victim to the very myth he created.



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